

Letter from the Editors

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A graduate student in psychology who teaches in the Jr./Sr. Writing Program at the University of Michigan e-mails me: What do you consider to be a proof in your discipline? How do you determine whether a proof is valid? And what do you consider to be your discipline, anyway? English? Rhetoric? Composition? Linguistics?

Dear Paul:

Those are reasonable questions, that writing specialists ought to answer for you. But experts, of course, disagree. The co-editors of this journal do not entirely agree. And talk about “proofs” is much less fashionable among writing specialists than it used to be. Still, some of us who do writing-across-the-disciplines consider a proof in “our discipline” to be a proof in “your discipline.” That is, some rhetoricians and some linguists study proofs in other disciplines/situations, asking, “What criteria do people in those disciplines/situations use to evaluate proofs?” “What counts as a valid proof in chemistry? In history? In psychology? In feminist research?” Broadly speaking, rhetoricians and linguists often focus on the language and practices of mature practitioners in the disciplines, and identify themselves with writing-in-the-disciplines or “WID.” Compositionists seldom use the word “proof.” They focus on students and on their whole composing process, broadly conceived. Compositionists are more closely associated with writing-across-the-curriculum, or “WAC,” and are often very interested in social and educational reform. These are the extreme positions—most interesting research and practice is carried on in sites which employ some complex configuration of these elements.

And that is why we named this journal “*Language and Learning across the Disciplines*,” and subtitled it “A forum for debates concerning interdisciplinarity, situated discourse communities, and writing-across-the-

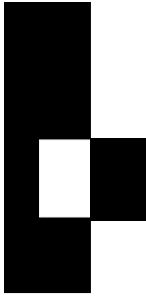
curriculum programs.” That signals our commitment to the range of theoretical positions among writing specialists, instructors of writing from all backgrounds, and the various institutional settings—from graduate programs dedicated to research in rhetoric and composition to applied programs whose enterprise includes areas as diverse as developing peer tutors and outreach to schools and communities.

In this issue, the articles take up, one way or another, questions arising out of the distributed nature of WAC/WID writing instruction. Kathryn Evans’ article speaks squarely from a compositionist position to the disciplinary instructor. Brian Sutton’s review of the literature on teaching the research paper in introductory composition is mixed: it incorporates a rhetorician’s attention to specific language practice, while staying within composition territory. Gottschalk’s history of the John S. Knight writing program makes an administrative case for the distribution of writing instruction across the university, and the profiles of other programs that follow all describe writing programs in which instruction is offered by practitioners in other disciplines. Baum-Brunner’s article confronts the internal contradictions of an introductory writing course that includes teachers of composition and teachers trained in other traditions. David Fleming’s article draws more deeply than the others on rhetorical traditions, putting them to work at the interface of the university and industry.

Language and Learning across the Disciplines has the particular mission of focusing attention on writing programs and research agenda that are university or college wide. Most of the conversation among writing specialists—the literature on evaluating faculty, for instance—proves to be aimed at English faculty. We have much to learn about writing-based courses in content areas, as well as much to offer.

It is now seven years since Art Young and Toby Fulwiler published their collection *Programs that Work*, where one can find a wide range of programs described. And programs change—innovation is the rule, as Katie Gottschalk’s history of the John S. Knight Program reminds us. Administrative issues in these writing programs are quite different from the issues confronted by WPAs in English Departments. We begin to address those issues by surveying the territory: inviting directors of writing programs across the curriculum to send us descriptions of their programs. Someday this may become an encyclopedia, but for the moment we see it as a process of collecting information. We expect to publish such descriptions with some regularity.

If you head a WAC program, and especially if it is an upper-division program or includes upper-division courses, and we haven’t asked you yet for a description, send it any way. In this issue, we begin the process of making these institutional structures more visible, in a section we have entitled “Programs Across the Curriculum.” Here Jane Perkins tells about the program at Clemson, Marty Townsend about the University of Missouri, Patricia Williams about Sam Houston State University, and Joan Hawthorne about the University of North Dakota.



Writing, Response, and Contexts of Production or, Why It Just Wouldn't Work to Write about Those Bratty Kids

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To respond well to something — whether it is a conceptual problem one is trying to solve, a question asked by a colleague, or a student paper — we need to understand what we are responding to. Unfortunately, we often don't, especially in the case of student papers. While we may (or may not) comprehend the propositional content of a given paper, we seldom understand the equally important influences that shape that content. Flower, Stein, Ackerman, Kantz, McCormick, & Peck (1990) have noted that “the written product can be an inadequate, even misleading, guide to the thinking process that produced it” (p. 21); Wallace (1996) has found that student texts alone don't reveal the range of different problems students face in producing those texts; and Prior (1994) has found that the multiple influences which shape textual production can be “literally marked by their absence” (p. 31). Prior goes on to point out that we need to analyze the unique complex of influences shaping the production of specific texts if we want to more fully understand the nature of disciplinarity. The same holds true for student writing: if we want to more fully understand it, we can no longer ignore its “context of production,” to use Nystrand's (1987) term.¹

Fortunately, a body of naturalistic studies has taught us much about the types of influences that shape student work. Examples of such influences include students' interpretations of the teacher's personality (Prior, 1991); students' views on the extent to which the writing they're asked to do will help them gain access to the “real world” of their chosen career (Chin, 1994); classroom discussion of a student's topic (Prior, 1994); students' interpretation of how routine a task is (Herrington, 1985); students' choices to read the textbook before or after writing (Walvoord and McCarthy, 1990); and students' assumptions about the extent of the teacher's knowledge and authority (Sperling and Freedman, 1987). Taken together, these studies suggest both that student writing is shaped by such contexts to a great extent and that the range of these contextual influences is incredibly wide. They suggest, moreover, that the writing and learning of any given student is shaped by its own unique configuration of such influences.

It is this last issue that poses the problem: since each student's writing is shaped by a unique complex of influences, the students we teach differ both from the students in the research and from each other. Thus, no matter how

much light research has shed on individual students' contexts of production, we remain ignorant of the specific influences that shape each of our students' writing.

What remains unclear is both the cost of this ignorance and what to do about it. Two case studies will be analyzed here to illustrate that this cost can indeed be high — that missed opportunities for learning are rife. Moreover, the analysis of these cases will suggest ways that this cost can be cut — ways that we can learn more about students' contexts of production and then use this knowledge to make our responses more effective. A first step in doing so is to better understand the complexity of these contexts; the analysis will suggest that these contexts are productively seen as a multi-layered complex of interpenetrating influences and that they can be heuristically divided into top and deeper layers. Top layers of context can be accessed by eliciting students' perceptions of their papers and of the teacher's response; deeper layers can be inferred when teachers account for the student perceptions in the top layer. After examples of these top and deeper layers are discussed in terms of their relationship to student learning, specific strategies for gaining access to them will be proposed. While these strategies may not help teachers understand every layer of the context of production, they will often shed light on particularly salient layers. Knowledge of these salient layers, the discussion will suggest, can help us better tailor our responses to the specific needs of each student. Conversely, without awareness of these layers, our responses will be unable to help students tap much of their potential.

Kiesha and Sally

Close examination of specific cases suggests what teachers can lose by being unaware of students' contexts of production. This particular case is taken from a qualitative descriptive research project conducted in a basic writing program at a large midwestern university. As part of this research, I audiotaped and transcribed student-teacher conferences, interviewed students and teachers, gave students questionnaires on writing and response, observed classes, and collected and analyzed two students' drafts and final texts. Typical of the interactions analyzed was part of a conference between a student-teacher pair I'll call Kiesha and Sally. Kiesha was a first-year student; Sally was an experienced teacher whose name had appeared several times on the university's list of excellent instructors. In this particular conference, Sally and Kiesha were discussing the first draft of Kiesha's research paper. The paper made very sparse use of sources in a situation where source use was key.

An important aspect of the context of production was suggested in my interview with Kiesha; she told me that she was happy with this draft of the paper because she had succeed in not plagiarizing. She went on to explain that she didn't include sources because she was afraid of plagiarizing; if she didn't include sources, she wouldn't plagiarize. This logic was apparent when I asked her what she thought of her paper and she replied:

I was kind of scared that I was gonna end up plagiarizing, or just, you know, sayin' exactly what they were sayin'. So, with my rough draft, I didn't put anything, any um, I think I like had two quotes in there. But everything in the rough draft was all mine. So I wanted to first get out what I had to say before, so I wouldn't get caught up with plagiarizing.

While Kiesha attributed the lack of sources to fear of plagiarism, Sally attributed this problem to general student ineptitude. She told me in our interview, "I tried to make it clear in class that by this point, they really needed to have a full rough draft, and Kiesha did not. . . . most other people in the class did not have a full rough draft. She kinda came into tutorial saying, 'Look, um, I just didn't get to put my sources in.'"

Since Sally seemed to be unaware of Kiesha's fear of plagiarism, all she could do was, in her words, "say [to Kiesha] 'Gee, won't the paper be better when it has sources.'" She felt frustrated and unable to help Kiesha: "I [went into the conference] thinking 'aw, shoot,' and I left thinking 'aw, shoot,' because she still had no source material. And I can't help her with that . . ." Sally wouldn't have felt so unable to help Kiesha had she known about Kiesha's fear of plagiarism. Had she known, she could have discussed with Kiesha more productive ways of avoiding plagiarism — ways other than avoiding sources. In this case, then, and we might infer in many others, the teacher would have needed to be more aware of the context of production in order to develop a more effective teaching strategy.

While being aware of student perceptions of the paper can suggest top layers of the context of production, accounting for these perceptions will help teachers infer even deeper layers of the context of production.² Accounting for Kiesha's perceptions (or partially accounting for them, since no teacher or researcher would have access to a full account), suggests that important deeper layers included Kiesha's assumptions both about the revision process and about ownership of ideas.

For instance, given Kiesha's belief that plagiarism can be avoided by adding sources after the fact, we can infer that she viewed the revision process as merely additive. She told me in the interview "I was going to, my plans were, like I said, to, to just do the paper and all, what I had to say, and see if that was okay. And then, for me to just kinda fit in the quotes, fit in my references or whatever." Since Kiesha did indeed carry out these plans to just insert her sources — and since she inserted them without re-shaping the rest of the paper — her revision was less than coherent. (It's worth noting that this additive view of the revision process also informed the way that Kiesha dealt with her thesis. She wrote the first draft of her paper without a thesis so that she could discover what she wanted to say; then, after she finished drafting the paper, she inserted a thesis in the same way that she inserted her sources, without significantly re-shaping the rest of the paper.)

Interacting with Kiesha's additive view of the revision process were her assumptions about ownership of ideas. While the study did not yield enough data to fully analyze this deeper layer, Kiesha's strategy of waiting to read about others' ideas in order to first come up with her own suggests that she saw others' texts as problematic sources of information and ideas for her. She seemed to see her ownership of ideas in dualistic terms: either she "owned" ideas which apparently had no connections with others' ideas, and thus avoided plagiarism, or else her ideas were exactly the same as others', in which case she plagiarized. She didn't seem to understand that ideas are socially constructed — that they are born of interaction with other ideas. Or, if she did realize that this was how the ideas in her source texts had been developed, she didn't feel that she herself was capable of developing ideas in this way.

Had Sally been aware of these deeper layers — had she tried to account for Kiesha's fear of plagiarism — she could have formulated even more effective response strategies. In response to Kiesha's view of the revision process as additive, for instance, she could not only have suggested ways to better integrate source material, but she also could have helped Kiesha to reconceptualize the revision process as something that's recursive and transformative rather than additive. In response to Kiesha's assumptions about ownership of ideas, Sally could have discussed with her the socially constructed nature of ideas and ways of interacting more productively with others' ideas. Such response strategies, grounded in specific contexts of production, would obviously vary according to the unique contexts that shape the writing of each student.

Maria and Robert

Juxtaposing Kiesha's case against another case will illustrate the vast difference in the contexts that shape each student's writing; it will suggest that being aware of and accounting for students' perceptions is something we need to do for each student. The following case is taken from a larger study in which I explored writing and response in two college classrooms, one a business and technical writing class, the other an introduction to film class. I observed and audiotaped almost all the classes taught over the course of a semester, collected copies of all handouts distributed by the teachers, conducted both discourse-based and semi-structured interviews with the teachers and most of the students (most participants were interviewed on several occasions), transcribed selected excerpts of the interviews and classes, and collected and analyzed multiple drafts of the students' papers with the instructors' responses.

From these data, I'll focus on a student-teacher pair from the introduction to film class. The teacher, Robert, was considered to be excellent by all but one of the students interviewed. He was a recent Ph.D. who had significant experience not only in film production but also as a publishing academic and a teacher of rhetoric and film. The student, Maria, was a first-year student who

attended almost all of Robert's classes, made frequent and insightful comments in class, and received A's on all her papers.

I'll focus on Robert's response to Maria's third and last paper, which was on Spielberg's film *E.T.* In this paper, Maria argued that narrative, mise-en-scene, editing, sound, and cinematography worked together to convey the theme that children, unlike adults, possess a unique ability to believe in magic and that "only youth can be trusted with *E.T.* because only youth have the innocence of unselfish love." Maria developed this argument in organized, focused exposition, citing and analyzing several concrete examples to support each of her sub-points. Robert gave the paper a 95 out of 100 and wrote in response:

Maria,

I really enjoyed your essay. This film is more interesting and complex than many believe. Family films are not supposed to be as intelligent as serious dramas and art films.

You support your analysis of Spielberg's development of the magic of youth with specific examples from a host of stylistic systems. Especially nice is where you recognize stylistic motifs that are carried out across the film, as in the film's repeated use of the jump cut progressions to extreme close ups of Elliot.

The description of Williams' music might have been, well, more descriptive, but the guy has done so much and remains so true to his formula that I doubt many would expect any more description.

This belief in the innocence of children comes largely out of the Romantic tradition. Of course not all children are innocent, and this is something that the cynic could note. However, Spielberg seems to fend off this easy critique by giving us other children, and older kids, who are not as innocent and trusting and caring as Elliot. Notice how Spielberg does give us a bratty-kids scene during the pizza dinner. Anyway, this all by way of saying that you've only scratched the surface of *E.T.*'s development of the magic of childhood. Recall, as well, that divorce and a missing father loom large in this story.

Good work.

It may seem at first glance that Maria and Robert shared similar interpretations of both Robert's response and Maria's paper, and thus that it wouldn't be particularly valuable for Robert to be aware of and account for Maria's perceptions. In the discourse-based interview Robert homed in on the penultimate paragraph of his response, reiterating his point about the "bratty-kids scene" suggesting that not all kids are as innocent as Elliot. He told me that he'd posed this as an "upper level challenge" to Maria, responding to her as he would to a grad student; he said that this "upper level challenge" involved telling her that she'd "maybe just scratched the surface" — that her analysis "oversimplified" things. Maria seemed to understand this response perfectly,

and like Robert, she focused on the penultimate paragraph. Asked about Robert's purpose in writing it, she said "I guess just like to show that when I wrote it, it made it seem all cut and dried. Oh, that [what I wrote] isn't completely true; the movie did include some things that lead against that." She seemed to agree with him: "as far as scratching the surface goes, I know I did, 'cause there's a lot of things I didn't address . . ." Thus, although Robert may not have known what Maria thought of her paper or his response, this lack of awareness seems not to matter. It appears that they had consistent interpretations of the response and that the response was useful, at least insofar as Maria seemed to agree with it.

However, closer consideration reveals that the response didn't fulfill one of its key intended functions; it didn't challenge Maria to write papers — either a revision of this one or future ones — that would recognize a film's complexity or opposing interpretations of a film. In our interview, Maria implied that her future papers would be no different; she said that she would keep the paper as it was, even if she revised it. She told me ". . . there's a lot of [contradictory evidence] I didn't address but of course I couldn't . . . I don't think that's a big problem." Thus although Maria said she agreed with Robert's response, and although the response (in my estimation) addressed the key area where Maria could make her paper even stronger, it failed to achieve much of its intended purpose. Its failure to do so had consequences that were not trivial, for even though Maria's paper had provided an excellent analysis of selected evidence, its elision of contradictory evidence meant that it lacked a characteristic key to the discourse of film studies, not to mention many other disciplines.

Robert's response may have failed in persuading Maria to address this evidence in part because the paper received a high grade, but that is not the whole story. The response was unable to achieve its purpose in large part because it wasn't able to take the context of production into account; the teacher didn't know why Maria had written the paper the way she had. A salient aspect of this context was that Maria noticed contradictory evidence before she wrote the paper; the problem was not that she just missed it. She noticed, in fact, the very same evidence that Robert had mentioned in his response — the "bratty kids" — and she was aware that these kids could be seen as undermining her claims about the innocence of childhood. She also knew that this evidence — and the complexity of the film in general — had been discussed by many of the critics and scholars she'd read. In short, she was aware of contradictory evidence when she was writing the paper and was aware that others had noted it as well. She explained her choice to ignore it by telling me that it didn't matter since there was more evidence supporting her argument than going against it; she also noted that she likes "everything to tie up real great."

Not surprisingly, this general context of production was comprised of more specific layers. These layers, which were interrelated, had to do with Maria's assumptions about what constituted good writing. The top layer, as we've seen, was that Maria didn't seem to think she should address complex-

ity and opposing evidence; she didn't think it was a "big problem," for instance, that she didn't. (As Flower et al. [1990] have noted, this is not an uncommon assumption.) Accounting for this assumption yields several deeper layers of the context of production. The most obvious of these is Maria's assumption, confirmed in our interview, that recognizing complexity and contradictory evidence gains nothing. Maria had no sense that these rhetorical moves would strengthen her paper.

Had a teacher been aware of this, the response could have been more effective. A teacher might mention, for instance, that addressing complexity and opposing interpretations can make writing more persuasive not only by adding to the writer's credibility (the writer has very carefully considered and analyzed the subject matter) but also by allowing the writer to address opposing interpretations with counter-arguments or to acknowledge them while at the same time maintaining (and perhaps providing additional evidence) that the writer's point still holds. Such strategies, a teacher might point out, can be much more persuasive than simply ignoring complexity and opposing interpretations.

Further accounting for Maria's reluctance to address Robert's response suggests still more layers of the context of production. One of these layers pertained to Maria's belief that writers should favor depth over breadth. While the depth over breadth principle didn't necessarily conflict with Robert's suggestion to address complexity and contradictory evidence, Maria assumed that it did. Pointing to the last paragraph of the response, she said "Like here, his criticisms. I know but, it'd be hard to include every little thing into seven pages." Her assumption about this contradiction was further suggested later in our interview when I paraphrased it to check my understanding:

M: . . . I think in like the page number, like if I had to write a big paper, you know,

K: um-hum

M: you know, I suppose. But in six pages I think if there's more things I probably wouldn't be able to do it justice

K: uh-huh

M: and that I wouldn't want to put it in. Do you know what I mean, so

K: um-hum. I know what you mean. That's a real good point. 'Cause you don't wanna just cram it in

M: yeah

K: without explaining it

M: yeah exactly

K: you know, and you also don't wanna explain it and write a 50-page paper

M: [laughs]

Had a teacher known about this underlying layer of context — Maria’s assumption that the depth over breadth principle meant she couldn’t address complexity — he or she could have pointed out that it’s possible to recognize complexity and contradictory evidence with just the occasional well-placed sentence or clause. A teacher might even give an example to the effect of “Although we do see bratty kids in the beginning of the film at the pizza dinner, the film nonetheless suggests the innocence of childhood by . . .” The teacher could then point out that this type of rhetorical move would allow Maria to retain the depth of her argument and remain within the page limit while at the same time recognizing at least some degree of complexity.

While Maria did not address the film’s complexity in part because she assumed she could not do so in a short paper, there was still another layer of influence. This other layer seemed to stem from Maria’s assumptions that, in a good paper, everything had to relate to the thesis and that recognizing complexity and addressing opposing interpretations would undermine her thesis. These assumptions were implied when I asked Maria what she took to be Robert’s purpose in writing the last paragraph of his response:

M: I guess just like to show that when I wrote it, it made it seem all cut and dried. . . . oh, that [what I wrote] isn’t completely true; the movie did include some things that lead against that.

K: oh, okay

M: But when I write I don’t like any loose ends, you know I like everything to tie up real great. So [if] something is included that would [go against what I have to say] I’d just leave it out. You know what I mean?

K: um-hum

M: You know like if I were to write about “there were these bratty kids,” it just wouldn’t work.

Thus Maria seemed to feel that if she recognized more of the film’s complexity, not only would she be unable to develop her points in the given page length but she would stray from and undermine her own thesis.

In response to this assumption, a teacher could point out that the previously discussed “yes, but” strategy would neither undermine the thesis nor stray from it since first, the writer would be maintaining her line of argument and second, she would be explicitly linking the contradictory evidence to her thesis. Alternatively, a teacher might raise the possibility of reworking the thesis into an even stronger one — one that recognizes the film’s complexity in a way such that opposing interpretations would no longer be opposing. (A teacher might give an example to the effect of “Much of the film’s power lies in the fact that it both recognizes the imperfections of children — we see, after all, how bratty they can be at the pizza dinner — at the same time that it confirms the goodness and innocence of childhood by . . .” The teacher could then encourage the student to go on to discuss what this complex depiction of

children implies.) The point here is not to rewrite Maria's paper for her or to suggest that there's an ideal text she should have written; rather, the point is to suggest that like many students, she was unaware of some of the strategies she could have used to make her writing even more persuasive. To help her learn these strategies, a teacher would need to be more aware of the assumptions that shaped what she did and didn't write.

An interesting side note to Maria's case is that the some of the teacher's response seemed to contradict her assumptions while other parts of it didn't. This is important in light of Lehrer's (1994) conclusion that "[w]hen the instructor introduces material which contradicts commonly held beliefs . . . greater care is needed than when simply presenting confirmatory or new material. The teacher should repeat and call attention to the fact that the common belief is wrong or arguable [or not universally applicable]" (p. 279). Obviously teachers can't do this if they aren't aware of it when students hold beliefs that contradict (or seem to contradict from the student's point of view) what they are suggesting. Only by knowing what Maria "knows" could a teacher have pointed out that there isn't necessarily a contradiction. However, it is important to be aware of student assumptions regardless of whether or not they contradict what we want them to learn. A case in point is Maria's belief that writers gain no benefits by recognizing complexity and opposing evidence; as previously noted, Robert could have explained these benefits if he'd been aware of Maria's assumption. Thus, regardless of whether a teacher's response contradicts or merely adds to what students know, our instruction can be more effective if we know what they know.

Implications for Practice

As the cases of Kiesha and Maria suggest, teachers need to be aware of the influences that shape textual production — in all their complexity and intertwining layers — to respond more effectively to student work. These influences, however, are so dynamic and multi-layered that it is impossible for a researcher, let alone a teacher, to become aware of every facet of them. (Surely, for instance, the interpretive work that Kiesha and Maria did in writing their papers and reading the teachers' responses was even more complex than this research was able to suggest.) If even researchers cannot access all the influences that shape student reading and writing, what does this mean for teachers, who don't have the luxury of interviewing students and poring over interview transcripts and all drafts of student writing?

It means two things. First, teachers need to be aware that our understanding of what students write — and thus our response to that writing — will always be limited to some extent. Second, because we have some control over the extent to which this understanding is limited, we should do what we can to make it less so.

Being Aware of our Limitations

When we're not aware that our understanding of and response to student writing is limited, both students and teachers can suffer. Robert, for instance, occasionally got quite frustrated when students' revisions did not address the issues he had raised in his response; he even told me at one point that two students' revisions really "pissed [him] off." Most teachers have felt this type of frustration — frustration that could be alleviated by the knowledge that in many cases the student tried but could not make use of a response that didn't address the salient aspect of their context of production. We are not the only ones hurt by our frustration; students can suffer as well. Not only might their grades be influenced, but they may get discouraged or angry when they sense teachers' frustration with them.

An awareness of the limitations of our response might not only preclude some of this negative affect (which shapes motivation and learning) but may also help us attribute students' writing problems to the appropriate source. Rather than automatically attributing these problems to student failure, we can ask ourselves if they are attributable to interactional failure — to a response that doesn't communicate what we intended, for instance. If it is a case of interactional failure we will be better able to address the consequences, for while we cannot do anything if the problem lies only in the student, we can do something if it lies within our interaction with the student. To see this possibility of interactional failure where we might previously have assumed student failure, we need to be aware that we do not have access to the full context of production and thus that the effectiveness of our response is necessarily limited.

Strategies to Broaden our Understanding of Contexts of Production

Although our responses to students will always be limited, there is a range of strategies we can use to make them less so. The first strategy that will be discussed, making use of research, can help us gain a general understanding of the ways in which contextual influences shape student writing, while the other strategies, having students self-assess their work and respond to teacher response, can give us insight into the context of production of specific students. These last two strategies may not help us understand this context for every student but will allow us to better understand salient aspects of it for many of them.

The understanding we gain from these strategies, especially from having students self-assess their work and respond to teacher response, must be weighed against the time they take. At first glance it may seem that however productive such strategies are, they won't fit into our already overflowing schedules. But rather than adding them to our list of teacherly things to do, we can use them to reshape this list so that the net time needed doesn't change

much and is better spent. This will be discussed in more detail after the strategies are outlined.

Making Use of Research

Becoming familiar with naturalistic research on writing and response is one strategy that will shed light on the powerful influence exerted by students' contexts of production. Researchers have already begun to paint detailed pictures of individual students and the layers of context that shape what they do and don't do. This research needs to continue; teachers can benefit significantly from being familiar with it. In addition to continuing to do this research, scholars should do meta-analyses of these studies; that is, each study should be analyzed not just in isolation but in juxtaposition with other studies. This should have three benefits. First, it should drive home Anson's (1989) point that each student is unique and that we need to be more responsive to each student as an individual whose needs and background differ (a little or a lot) from any other student's. The more we look at specific cases against each other, the more apparent this diversity will be. Second, meta-analysis will help us become more aware of the range of possibilities — the different types of influences that may shape what our students do. It will help us see that, rather than one general undifferentiated problem, student writing that doesn't meet our expectations may be attributable to a variety of very specific problems or assumptions. Third, meta-analysis will shed light on any patterns that emerge across cases. Armed with an awareness of patterns and possibilities, teachers will be more sensitive to influences that may be shaping their students' writing.

Having Students Self-Assess Their Work

In addition to research and meta-analysis of research, we need strategies that will elicit information specific to each student we teach. One such strategy is to have students assess their own work and to use what each of them says and implies in the assessment to build a better representation of the context of production.

It was, for example, by asking Kiesha to assess her work that I gained insight into the top layer of the context that informed her text. (She told me about her fear of plagiarism in response to my question "what did you think about your paper?") Although I was a researcher rather than a teacher in that situation, there's no reason that teachers can't ask students similar questions. Such questions might include the following:

- What did you think of your paper?
- How hard or easy was it for you to write the paper?
- Were there any particular goals you were trying to achieve in writing the paper?

- What would you say are the strongest parts of your paper? Why?
- Which parts of your paper are you least sure about? Why?

Teachers could have students write “cover letters” to their papers addressing these issues and then use what students write in the letter to inform their responses. A more informal version of this would be to have students take five minutes or so to write a little note and/or marginalia on their papers before handing them in. In addition to this or instead of this, teachers could ask these questions in one-on-one conferences with students. We could then ask follow-up questions eliciting even more information that might help us better respond to a student’s work.

While the question that yielded key information from Kiesha happened to be “what did you think of your paper?” in other cases contextual information might be elicited by an entirely different prompt; each teacher will have a better sense of which issues might be worth asking about given what she or he knows of the student and the assignment. A typical instance in which one of the other questions helped elicit information happened in our university’s writing center, where I was working as a consultant. A first-year student came in with a political science paper that was basically a paean to the U.S. Constitution; it could be paraphrased “I like this about our constitution,” “I like that about our constitution,” and “I like this other thing about our constitution.” These claims to greatness were both unsupported and unconnected. To gain insight into this paper’s context of production, I asked the student what goals he had been trying to achieve. He replied that his main goal had been to “give his opinions” since his professor, upon reading his previous paper, had told him to move beyond summary by including what he thought.

Had I not known this contextual information, I most likely would have responded by raising issues of coherence and support, and the student might have seen these issues as totally separate from his main goal of trying to “give his opinion.” However, knowing what I did about the context of production, I thought a more productive response would explicitly address his goal for the paper. I first told him that he’d accomplished this goal (he had indeed given his opinion and avoided summary). I then continued to address his goal by exploring with him ways that he might give his opinions while at the same time supporting them and showing the connections between them. Thus, rather than leaving with the message that he should do X, Y, and Z when only X was his goal, he left with the message that he could do X in such a way that Y and Z happen too. This is especially important in light of Walker and Elias’ (1987) finding that the success of the student-teacher conferences they studied hinged not on how much talking was done by the student vs. the teacher but rather on the extent to which the talk addressed the student’s felt needs. Thus having students reflect on their work, in addition to having meta-cognitive and other

benefits for students, also can also help teachers identify students' felt needs and other key contexts informing the production of their papers.

Having Students Respond to the Teacher's Response

Another productive strategy is to have students respond to teachers' responses (Evans, 1995; Gay, 1995). Certainly this strategy can suggest how a student interprets our response, which is more than we usually know; moreover, it can sometimes help us infer why our responses are interpreted they way they are. More specifically, a response to our response can allow us to infer students' assumptions about what constitutes good writing and how to achieve it — assumptions which shape both their writing as well as their interpretation of our response.

For example, just as Maria's response to Robert's response helped suggest her assumptions about depth vs. breadth and what it meant to have everything "tie up" with the thesis, so too did one of my film students respond to my response in a way that told me much about his paper's context of production. The student, a junior named Chad, didn't understand why I didn't understand the organization of his paper. (I didn't understand because I thought he'd discussed the editing of *North by Northwest* in two separate sections; the paper seemed to raise the issue of editing, discuss another issue, and then jump back to editing.) After I explained why this organization confused me, he responded to my response by telling me that in the first half of his paper he was discussing editing and lighting to illustrate one sub-point, while in the second half he was discussing editing and mise-en-scene to illustrate another sub-point; it wouldn't make sense to put the two paragraphs about editing in the same section since they were illustrating different sub-points.

It was only by hearing his response to my response — by realizing that he didn't understand why I didn't understand — that I was able to see the crucial context of why he'd organized his paper the way he did. Once I became aware of this key context — once I understood that he'd intended the paper to be organized around sub-arguments rather than cinematic techniques — I was able to revise my response to help him rather than confuse him. My first attempt at a response had unwittingly encouraged him to collapse his sub-arguments into one undifferentiated argument; my revised response helped him to better draw distinctions between his sub-arguments. In other words, instead of encouraging him to re-structure the paper to illustrate an argument like "Through editing, lighting, and mise-en-scene, the film illustrates X," we worked on making it more apparent to the reader that the structure of the paper reflected a more complex argument to the effect of "While editing and lighting work together in one way to accomplish X1, editing and mise-en-scene work together in another way to accomplish X2."

There are several different ways we might solicit students' responses to our responses. As happened in the above example, we could meet with them and look for cues that imply their response to what is being said. Or, we could

ask questions specifically eliciting this information. Such questions might include the following:

- Which parts of the response seemed most useful to you? Why?
- Which parts might not be appropriate for you to consider? Why not?
- Was there anything that didn't make sense or that you would like to have illustrated with an example?
- Was there anything my response didn't address that you wish it had?

Such questions could be asked and answered orally, at the end of a conference, or in writing. If done in writing, one option would be for students to turn in their responses, perhaps accompanied by a copy of their paper and the teacher's response, a few days after the paper had been returned to them. Teachers could then either write a brief reaction or tell students that they'd consider this information when responding to the next set of papers. Still another option would be to have students integrate their responses into a cover letter that would accompany the revision or the next paper.

Time Needed to Have Students Self-Assess and Respond to Response

It may seem time-consuming to have students respond to the teacher's response (or even to have them self-assess and make use of their assessments), but it doesn't necessarily have to be. While it does take time to elicit and read or listen to students' assessments and responses, there are two ways that these strategies can help us save time responding to student work.

First, these strategies can give us a better sense of what students do and don't understand and thus can save us from explaining issues they already grasp. As Onore (1989) has found, what students have learned about writing is not necessarily apparent in their texts. Wallace (1996) has noted, more specifically, that looking at student texts doesn't reveal whether a given problem arises because a student is unable to articulate intentions that would lead to effective writing, or because the student has trouble implementing these intentions, or because the student is unable to judge the fulfillment of these intentions. The more we know about a student's context of production, the less likely we are to waste time focusing on, say, an issue of articulation when the problem lies in implementation.

Second, we can save time by using what we learn about students' contexts of production to help us select one or two issues, out of many possible ones, that our response will focus on. There is nothing to be gained and much to be lost by addressing every issue in a paper. Responses that do so, as we know, are more likely to confuse students, while responses that focus on one or two issues are more likely to help them understand and remember what is

being suggested. Of course to select issues to focus on, we need a basis for selection. Many teachers make this choice based on which problems, if addressed, would make the biggest difference in the overall quality of the work; however, given that more learning happens when students' expressed questions and needs are addressed (Smith, 1975), we should also consider what we glean from self-assessments and responses to our responses when we choose what issues to focus on.

Conclusion

Although it is not possible for teachers to be aware of every influence shaping the production of a paper, nonetheless we can and should be more aware of the most salient influences. To do this, we need to actively solicit information about these influences, and we need to use what we learn and infer in response to our solicitations to develop teaching strategies that are tailored to the specific set of needs, goals, and assumptions held by each student.³ Just as Mina Shaughnessy (1977) urged us to understand the patterns and logic underlying basic writers' "errors," so too do we need to understand the layers of logic that shape what each of our students does. We can gain this understanding by using strategies such as student self-assessment and response to response — strategies that can help us access the top layers of the context of production. These top layers — student perceptions of their papers and our responses — include any conscious goals a student is trying to achieve and a student's conscious assumptions about what constitutes effective writing and how it is achieved. From these top layers we can often infer deeper layers, which include tacit goals and assumptions about writing and the writing process. Becoming aware of as many of these layers as possible allows us to formulate responses that better address the unique needs of particular students. The better these needs are addressed, the more our students will learn both about their subject matter and how to write about that subject matter.

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Notes

¹This term is used here in a sociohistoric sense, with the assumption that any human interaction, including student-teacher interaction, is shaped by a confluence of multiple histories — histories that are personal, interpersonal, institutional, and sociocultural. “Context of production,” then, as Chin (1994) has noted, encompasses not only what’s happening at the moment of composing but also the broader influences that inform that moment. The broader influences discussed here will pertain chiefly to students’ assumptions about what constitutes effective writing and how such writing is achieved, although as Chin points out, it is also important to consider how such factors interact with material and other influences.

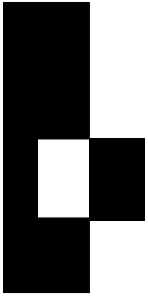
²By “accounting” I mean contextualizing within a more global framework (as opposed to establishing a neat and direct causality).

³The implications of seeing response in this way warrant further thought. It is apparent that like the effectiveness of any text, the effectiveness of a teacher’s response cannot be judged in a vacuum. Just as any text might work in one situation but not another, so too is the case with response. Its effectiveness is determined not by having a certain fixed set of characteristics (e.g., it can be oral or written, short or long, directive or suggestive) but rather by its ability to understand and adapt to particular situations and people.

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Putting—and Keeping—the Cornell Writing Program in Its Place: Writing in the Disciplines

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And nothing is more essential to academic life than the use of written language, as a means to the ends of communication and the construction of knowledge. What we [teachers of writing] teach, therefore, is fundamentally powerful and important, even if we are not. Within our institutions, writing teachers and their courses might be subordinated to all other kinds of instruction, but written language is not subordinate to anything. (Hjortshoj 499)

Faculty at Cornell University early harbored the belief that the teaching of writing should be firmly embedded in the study of material about which both faculty and students were (or were becoming) knowledgeable. Reacting to Harvard University's famous "theme a day on any subject" approach which some considered to favor form over substance, Professor Lane Cooper (Department of English) in 1910 enjoined:

Let the teacher of writers, as well as the writer, observe the caution of Horace, and choose well his proper field. Some portion, or phase, of this subject which he loves is the thing about which he may ask his students to write; and not in helter-skelter fashion, as if it made no difference where one began, what one observed next, and so on, save as a question of formal order; but progressively, on the supposition that in the advance toward knowledge and understanding certain things, not formal, but substantial, necessarily precede others. (rpt. in Brereton 257)

Cooper's colleague, Professor James Morgan Hart, likewise was noted in his day as emphasizing content over form and grammar: "Our Cornell experience is that the most difficult thing to overcome is the lack of thought. Most of our freshmen seem to believe that anything patched up in grammatical shape will pass for writing . . ." (qtd. William Lyon Phelps in 1912; Brereton 289-90).

Remarkably, most changes in the place of writing at Cornell appear to have come about in association with the tenacious belief that studying writing means not simply the study of form and grammar but the development of ideas and inquiry through writing. The principle remains a crucial one today. Where

many colleges and universities continue to struggle over whether or not literature should be taught in composition courses, or whether the English Department makes the best home for the writing program, where they are scrambling to develop support for the teaching of writing, Cornell has established a far-reaching and extensive program of first-year writing classes taught in the disciplines. Each semester, the independently funded and situated John S. Knight Writing Program coordinates a program of writing seminars offered by over thirty departments and programs (e.g., Anthropology, Classics, Ecology and Systematics, English, History); students may choose from over 100 subjects such as “Death and Dying in Anthropological Perspective,” “Socrates the Athenian,” “Finding Meaning in Nature,” “Shakespeare,” or “Local History: Cornell University.” The program is taken for granted by the institution, but outside observers find startling the depth of support it receives from the university and the range of its work.

The history of the creation of such a program, the one academic experience virtually all Cornell undergraduates share,¹ warrants analysis and explanation; the future of the program depends on understanding the foundations of its past successes, crises, and reformulations and using that understanding to shape the program’s development. Among those understandings surely must be the realization that a writing program must work for, with, and in the interests of the disciplines, the sites in which language is embedded; it cannot be isolated administratively or in any other way if it is to operate successfully, if it is best to assist students and faculty. At the same time, it also appears that writing programs—perhaps any university-wide program—may necessarily have to undergo regular cycles of institutional doubt and re-evaluation given certain recurring tendencies and the difficulties of thoroughly integrating writing experiences into students’ academic work throughout the curriculum.

A Brief History of Writing Programs at Cornell

Freshman English: Teaching Writing as Teaching English

At Cornell, founded in 1865, courses in writing were well enough established by 1891 that James Morgan Hart had published an article entitled “Cornell Course in Rhetoric and English Philology,” following that in 1895 with *A Handbook of English Composition* (cited Brereton). While the Public Speaking Department’s “Cornell School of Rhetoric” flourished in the 1920s,² and offered such courses as “Argument and Debate” taught by Everett Lee Hunt, who believed that “one could not separate ideas from techniques, content from form” (Theodore Windt, qtd. Corbett 6), writing for the university’s students was taught in the Department of English in courses firmly rooted in the study of literature: an early, basic first-year course was long called simply “Introductory Course,” in that it introduced students to literature and writing. The program has some claim to fame through association with William Strunk, who in 1918 wrote a handy little book, *The Elements of Composition*, for use in

his classes.³ Possibly produced, John Brereton suggests, in reaction to the over-inclusiveness of one particularly hefty tome (359), the little book became a classic and remains, as revised by E. B. White, popular at Cornell and elsewhere.

One has to keep in mind, however, that Freshman English, offered and taught by the English Department, located in the College of Arts and Sciences, was serving students in all seven of Cornell's colleges.⁴ Unrest was bound to develop, and Freshman English as taught by the Department of English did not remain popular. According to faculty who taught in the 1950s and '60s, Freshman English when led by William Sale required that—on the model of a course at his alma mater, Yale—a paper be written for each of the three weekly class meetings. In the fall semester, all instructors taught from the same volume of essays picked by a committee, the chair of which, according to one contemporary, did all the work; in the spring they had more leeway to shape the course to their tastes. Professor Emeritus Scott Elledge recalls that the course was taught by people who cared about *how* things were written but also mentions the frequently voiced concern over whether the course was *about* anything.

Outside the Department of English others evidently were concerned that emphasis was being placed on writing *skills*—students, they believed, needed to concentrate on writing that emphasized reading and thinking. Dissatisfaction with Freshman English began to arise from a number of quarters. Edgar Rosenberg, then associate professor in the English Department, outlined in a 1966 speech for Cornell's trustees the weaknesses in Freshman English which ultimately led to its dismantling. Looming large among those weaknesses was the boredom shared by students and instructors. Rosenberg described the "sense of anonymity which easily attaches to large numbers of anything" taken by 2000 students: a student is "apt to feel . . . that a course addressed to nineteen hundred and ninety-nine others is not going to respect (or indulge him in) his own individual tastes and proclivities." The students disliked the lack of choice, and the instructors, often poorly qualified, were themselves antagonistic toward the job ("I'd rather teach cooking," Rosenberg reports one instructor as saying). Not mentioned directly in his comments is the prevalent concern that in order to staff the courses, the English Department was hiring many adjunct and junior faculty who had no hope of being hired permanently (a concern I wish were prevalent in universities across the country today).

Not surprisingly, the suggestion arose that the writing program be re-structured. In line with the national unrest of the times, in 1964-65 the Cornell faculty re-examined undergraduate education and in 1965 issued "The Report of the Faculty Committee on the Quality of Undergraduate Instruction," referred to as the Kahn/Bowers Report after the chair, Alfred Kahn, the distinguished economist who while in D.C. tried to clean up bureaucratic writing and the airlines, and after the vice-chair, physicist Raymond Bowers.⁵ This report agreed with the conclusions of a preliminary "Humanities Report" issued by the Guerlac Commission which had recommended that writing seminars be-

come the responsibility of many departments, not just of English. The proposal received enthusiastic support from departments such as History of Art and Philosophy; these departments saw writing as integral parts of their own disciplines, and they also saw writing seminars as excellent forums in which to target students for recruitment to the major. They believed they could take the burden off English (a process that would advantageously include increasing their own number of TAs) while revitalizing the content of the seminars and providing additional faculty taught and supervised courses.

Freshman Humanities: Teaching Writing in the Disciplines

In 1966, therefore, the new Freshman Humanities Program began, with seminars in thirty subjects offered by nine departments: Comparative Literature, English, German Studies, Government, History, History of Art, Philosophy, Romance Studies, and Speech and Drama. The new program by its very structure firmly asserted that writing courses need substantive matters about which to write and that literature, while an appropriate topic for a writing course, is only one of many appropriate topics. The brochure introducing the new humanities seminars included the following statement, written by the new director of the program, Edgar Rosenberg; it sums up the (publicly acknowledged) reasons for change:

Where the old Freshman English program was conducted in 110 uniform sections, the new courses will be taught in units of approximately four sections each, with the result that the staff of each course will be working in close rapport. . . . Since each of the colloquia reflects . . . the instructor's particular field of interest and expertise, we may expect the calibre of the instruction to be uncommonly high. Instead of being staffed chiefly by teaching assistants . . . the Cornell freshmen colloquia will be taught largely by faculty members and only the very ablest assistants. But the essential aim of the program (and the most urgent reason for its institution) is to respect, as nearly as possible, the intellectual proclivities which the freshman brings with him to Cornell, and to give him a reasonably wide choice of courses from the start.

At the same time, . . . each of the courses admitted to the program is emphatically designed to be a composition course. In abolishing Freshman English . . . the faculty had no intention whatever of diminishing the practice of writing. On the contrary, it intended to encourage the stimulus to composition by providing the freshmen with stimulating subjects to write about. You may assume that each course . . . requires approximately a paper a week. . . . (Fall 1966, Freshman Humanities Courses brochure)

Aside from the shock that instructors in departments such as History of Art experienced when they first read essays written by students who didn't intend to major in their fields, who were even intending to be engineers, things seem to have gone smoothly for awhile. The English Department invented new courses such as "Writing from Experience," which remained for some decades a popular writing seminar, and later, to take the pressure off the latter course, "Practical Prose," currently "The Practice of Prose"; TAs, at least in some departments such as English, benefited from working closely with faculty. New programs began: in 1972 a small bequest helped to establish a tutorial service which Nancy Kaplan would later develop into a special tutorial writing course and a writing center, now the Writing Workshop; and in the spring of 1975 the English Department's Robert Farrell developed a voluntary summer training and apprenticeship program for TAs called Emphasis on Writing, or EOW. Students and instructors alike appreciated the choices available and the intellectual stimulation of working within their chosen fields. Of the complaints recorded by Rosenberg in 1967 on the then nine-months old program, one is, interestingly, that the engineering students and faculty would like to see still *more* choice of courses, preferably in fields such as government. He mentions no dissatisfaction over the loss of the English literature or "pure composition" course. Rosenberg does report that one chairman "who expresses . . . complete satisfaction with the program nevertheless subjoins her fear 'that over the years the concerns of exposition will disappear altogether in favor of a completely literary (or, say, historical, anyhow professional) approach.'"

The chair's fear anticipated some of the problems soon to develop. According to a 1976 report by Helen Elias, acting as a research aide in the Office of Special Programs, by 1972 the courses were arousing a variety of anxieties, including concern that little attention was given to teaching writing (1). When in 1974 David Connor took over the directorship of the program, now called the Freshman Seminar Program (FSP), he acted to intensify attention to writing; a slim handbook he wrote for the use of instructors remains in the Program's files. Nevertheless, the Elias report indicates that in 1976 the crisis was growing, although the cause could not have been just the perception that the courses had become humanities courses with little emphasis on writing. (At a minimum, according to a 1977 student survey, most seminars at least required seven to nine essays.) Rather, there seems also to have been a growing hostility emanating toward and from the Seminar Program. Why?

*Problems with Administration: The Need for a Decentralized Center*⁶

A major source of aggravation seems to have been insufficient consideration of how the Freshman Humanities/Seminar Program might best be administered, especially in light of the complex new problems that would probably arise and require close, full-time administrative attention. The seminars historically had been both taught and administered within one and the same depart-

ment, English. Now English, with many departments involved, was still in charge of the new program, by means of a rotating part-time directorship. An experienced writing program administrator at another university, David E. Schwalm, recently commented tellingly on his early tenure as a director:

as a regular faculty member I had absolutely no concept of my university beyond my department. I could not have told you who was dean or provost or chancellor and I didn't really care much. I knew very few faculty outside of my department The very idea of taking an institutional perspective never even occurred to me. . . . The nearly catastrophic mistakes I made as a WPA [writing program administrator] happened early in my WPA career and mostly were a result of not yet having developed an institutional perspective that allowed me to locate the writing program in the overall institutional picture. Does this resemble the experience of others . . . ? (e-mail post)

Yes, and the need for perspective ranges from awareness of university-wide politics and pragmatics to, even more seriously, awareness of the role of writing as it is situated throughout the university. The first director of the new Humanities Seminars, Edgar Rosenberg, admitted to inexperience that had led to mis-steps: "The truth of the matter is that when I was asked to take on this term-appointment as freshman impresario a mere three months after I joined the Cornell faculty, I had only the dimmest awareness of anything beyond Goldwin Smith [Hall]" (Report 5). From this inauspicious start he had to begin extensive excursions to other colleges to illuminate them about the new program and to bargain with departments recalcitrant about offering seminars to the new program. Given the relatively casual and departmentally bound administrative structure, nevertheless, a similarly dim awareness of life outside the College of Arts and Sciences or even the English Department was bound to persist with new directors, permitting insufficient or belated attention to the needs of the many newly participating departments and of the six other client colleges and their students. Communication and cooperation were faulty in many areas.

Questions of Ownership: Faculty and Departments

With the directorship of the Writing Program obviously located in the Department of English, questions of ownership and control began to arise among the many other concerned departments. One difficulty, typical of the pragmatic frustrations that can aggravate all concerned in a writing program, was linked to ownership of writing as well as to the suspicions of exclusion a "gate-keeper" course can create: Registration into the seminars became much more problematic in the 1970s than in the old one-course, one-subject days. Departments wanted big enrollments in seminars they offered. Departments other than English that offered the humanities/freshman seminars were indignant when their courses received low enrollments while English department

courses overflowed into new sections. They observed that new sections of courses such as the much-requested “Writing from Experience” were opened up when students could have been encouraged to enroll in courses such as German Studies’ “Fairy Tales.” Students, they pointed out, equated writing with “English”: did the Writing Program sufficiently encourage students to broaden their views? Despite some efforts by the program’s directors to inform students that all the seminars, not just those offered by English, taught writing, the message did not get across: fully 40% of students one year asked for “Writing from Experience” or “Practical Prose Composition.”

In 1977 a report written by a staff member of the Freshman Seminar Program to sum up a student survey further hints at hostilities involving ownership and control between those running the Freshman Seminar Program and participating departments, even though its findings in regard to the teaching of writing are generally positive. In this lengthy and publicly circulated report, the writer began her concluding remarks with: “What I regret is that a few instructors, including all those in the German department, refused to have anything to do with the questionnaire. . . .” The observation is surely an odd one to select for the conclusion. In an earlier passage the writer notes that she had, in composing one survey question, used “more than a touch of that wryness for which those who have taught college composition for many years are noted—and sometimes criticized.” The language indicates that participants in the Seminar Program had assumed the role of a beleaguered “in” group. The then director of the Seminar Program, Robert Farrell, had been made a Dean of Writing by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Harry Levin, but creating a Dean of Writing (according to some observers) may actually have been a source of increased friction with departments, who felt the loss of control over courses and a program they considered to be theirs, and who questioned the missives arriving from the Seminar Program office, which was trying to give more direction to the teaching of writing. Friction with the Department of History reached such a state that national publicity resulted, a burden the Seminar Program hardly needed.

Questions of Exclusion: The Colleges

Registration difficulties also acted as a litmus paper for dissatisfaction in the colleges being served by the Writing Program. Because students wanted fair and optimal placement into favorite courses, quotas had been set up to save places in each seminar for students from each of the seven colleges. Unfortunately, these quotas seem instead to have created, or more likely fortified, the notion that students from the College of Arts and Sciences were favored and that students from colleges such as Agriculture and Life Sciences and Engineering were discriminated against (by teachers as well as by the registration process). Even though in March, 1979, *The Cornell Sun* published an article called “Students, Profs Laud University Writing Efforts,” not everything was being lauded everywhere. In this same year the College of

Agriculture and Life Sciences decided to run its own survey of Freshman Writing Seminars. Interestingly, the responses seem to indicate that the students on the whole felt they were being well served: 72% believed their writing “improved some or substantially” while “the mean response . . . seemed to be that the seminars were somewhat helpful.” That the College felt itself to be poorly served, however, is evident in the survey’s construction, which includes a section on “Comparisons between Courses with High and Low Proportions of Agriculture Students.” Occasional survey questions suggest failures in communication about the purposes of the program. For instance, one “highlight” reports that “Most of the required writing seemed to be expository or creative, only 15 percent did any scientific writing at all.” The Freshman Seminars were not, of course, designed to teach “scientific,” meaning technical scientific writing. (Today’s Freshman Writing Seminars include a number drawn from the sciences, a happy situation that we hope to encourage, but not because they offer technical writing. They do not: they offer topics in the sciences susceptible to the same kinds of thought and attention to language as seminars offered in the humanities.) According to the 1979 survey, 80% of CALS students took their first choice seminars, and the survey concludes that “generally, there was no favoritism of Arts students over Ag students in attention or grading. Some Ag students, however, seem to feel that Arts students had better access to their first choice seminars.” Dissatisfaction, then, was deeply entrenched, dissatisfaction which culminated in the Ag College’s 1981 submission of a “Resolution on Writing Skills” to the provost of the university which asked for improved attention to writing. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences was not alone in its discontent. In May 1978, the Hotel School had withdrawn from the Seminar Program and established its own writing faculty, and “in June 1980 the committee evaluating the Core Curriculum of the College of Engineering expressed reservations about the quality of writing instruction offered in the FSP” (Provost’s Report 9).

The Holmes and Sturgeon Reports: Sorting out Problems of Substance and Administration

In late 1980, therefore, and explicitly because of the concerns of the faculties of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and of the College of Human Ecology (Holmes Report 5), University Provost Keith Kennedy established a Commission on Writing composed of fourteen faculty members drawn from across the university. By November of 1980 the Provost’s Commission on Writing had begun meeting; it continued intensive work for nearly a year. Its year of investigations along with a 1981 large-scale survey administered to faculty, seminar faculty, and students provided the Commission with observations that led to large-scale suggestions for changes in the University’s approach to teaching writing. These recommendations were presented in October 1981 in a “Report of The Provost’s Commission on Writing,” commonly

known as the Holmes Report after its chair, Professor Clive Holmes, Department of History.

The university's Holmes Report, along with the College of Arts and Sciences' response ("Report of The College Writing Committee" May, 1982), are important documents in the history of the teaching of writing at Cornell; they voice perceptions which are as valuable today as they were in 1981. Significantly, the Holmes Report did not focus only on the teaching of Freshman Writing Seminars. Given the perceived insufficiency of one early year of instruction, many of its conclusions and recommendations address the need for continued attention to writing after the freshman year; in terms of the first year writing program, it criticizes less its substance than its administration:

The Freshman Seminar Program (FSP) is well thought of by students, but, as the one University-wide program which explicitly purports to develop students' writing skills, it has borne the brunt of the criticism of a faculty troubled by undergraduates' writing deficiencies. Some of the criticism seems misplaced. It is based on the misapprehension we have already remarked: the comfortable assumption that the freshman writing program is uniquely responsible for students' writing skills. Other criticisms are concerned less with the substance of the program than with poor communications between the 'consumer' colleges and the Director of the FSP. Mechanisms through which the former could express their concerns over, for example, placement procedures, have been virtually nonexistent, and minor issues have festered. (25)

All those communication problems, these failures in administration that could be expected in a huge program run by a part-time English department faculty director, had become fully evident. Communication and collaboration were demonstrably lacking among teachers, administrators, and colleges. The commission discovered, for instance, that ". . . there has been virtually no coordination between the Directors of the FSP and of EOW [the summer program of freshman writing seminars that included internship and training of TAs] . . . [and that] faculty actively involved both as teachers and administrators in the FSP had 'only vague knowledge' about the activities of EOW" (28). It found also that no attempt had been made to ensure training of TAs (29); and that some were trained who never teach (29)—more failure in coordination. It found a ". . . complete absence of dialogue among those concerned with the Writing Workshop, the FSP, or the English Department" (31). The writing assessment program and the College of Engineering saw English 135, Writing from Experience, and English 136, The Practice of Prose, as the place for "marginal" students; faculty leaders of these courses did not agree (32). Most damagingly, in terms of administration, the Commission concluded that "The current [title of] 'Director' seems a misnomer: he directs very little. The director is scarcely involved in the activities of the EOW program or of the Writing

Workshop: both are, in effect, independent agencies. The director is hostage to the department for the provision of seminars: who teaches and what is taught are matters about which he can do essentially nothing" (37).

These were the administrative problems of a too isolated center, as was even the much-noted failure of a substantial number of the writing seminars to follow the guidelines of the program in regard to teaching writing: The chair of the Holmes Commission reported in an Arts College faculty meeting that "students are sometimes asked for only three or four large papers; they are seldom given the opportunity to rewrite their papers, and grading is often inadequate or untimely. These conditions are the result of administrative weakness, due to the departments' independence and the lack of supervision of the graduate students teaching the courses" (3 November 1981 minutes). In a move that still bears notice, however, the Commission among other recommendations nevertheless had proposed large-scale modification of the substance and methodology of first-year writing courses, retreating in a familiar move to a "back to basics," writing skills approach: "These courses would concentrate on principles of sentence and paragraph structure" (39) for the first semester with courses that would be taught predominantly by English; the writing of "substantial expository essays" (14) based on subjects in the expressive arts, humanities, or social sciences (39) could return in the second semester.

But as Jonathan Bishop, Professor of English and then director of the Freshman Seminar Program had noted in the November 3, 1981 faculty meeting, to rely on courses and administration in the Department of English would be to perpetuate the writing program's problems:

As the [Holmes Report] recommendations acknowledge, the Director of the program has been a servant of the departments, lacking much authority, and that is one reason why there has not been an adequate training program. But the recommendation that the program be moved back to one department seems to be in conflict with the desire for strong administration. To fulfill that aim, an independent program, separately funded, answerable to the Provost, would be indicated; instead, the [present] proposal would reinforce the director's role as a servant of the English department, and at the same time do away with a program that has been moderately successful. (3 November 1981 minutes)

Ultimately, therefore, the College of Arts and Sciences responded, after well attended, passionately argued faculty meetings, by approving the follow-up "Report of The College Writing Committee" (known as the "Sturgeon Report" after its chair, Nicholas Sturgeon, Department of Philosophy), a report which pointed out that "the Commission's report nowhere explicitly addresses the crucial question of whether writing has been taught well in courses which do adhere to the current guidelines" (6) and successfully argued that instead new procedures for ensuring good teaching and good administration be instituted.

The recommendations of the College Writing Committee's Sturgeon Report accordingly became the primary basis of the current Writing Program.

Fortunately, both the Provost's Commission and the College of Arts and Sciences' Committee agreed that the teaching of first-year writing for the entire university should be coordinated by one full-time director in a well-funded program. When commenting on the Hotel School's decentralized writing program, the Holmes Report had argued, for reasons also argued by today's faculty and administration, that decentralization into a number of separate writing programs was a bad idea, economically and educationally:

Any attempt [by individual colleges] to institute properly funded and staffed programs would present many practical difficulties, and would entail expensive duplication within the University. However, these pragmatic concerns weighed less in our rejection of decentralization than did our sense, shared by the Deans of Instruction of the various colleges, that any move to isolate students within their particular colleges is to be resisted. Our students benefit from working with their peers in different colleges, and we were reluctant to sacrifice the common FSP learning experience which, for many students outside the Arts College, also provides their only exposure to the humanities. (44)

Ultimately, the solution to making sure that seminars were better taught, that they taught writing, and that lines of communication and cooperation were working between administrators, faculty, and colleges, lay in "decentralized centralization": contributing departments continued their financial and professorial commitments to the program (i.e., funding graduate student and faculty taught seminars, maintaining faculty mentorship of graduate students, designing seminars) while the Writing Program gained authority and perspective as it became disengaged from allegiance to one department or course(s) in an independently situated program that reported not to a department but to the dean of the college and consulted regularly with a university-wide committee. It also was given its own substantial financial base (which has since been improved with endowments) from which to undertake essential processes such as providing additional funding to participating departments for TA taught seminars and for developing programs such as TA training.

The John S. Knight Writing Program: Creating a Decentralized Interdisciplinary Center

The new Writing Program (now the John S. Knight Writing Program) began, then, in 1982. Its first director, a new appointment from outside, was Fredric V. Bogel; I began my association with the Program at the same time as the associate director. As has been clear from this history, much of the future success of the writing program would depend on the institutional involvement

of the directorship, and so while both Rick Bogel and I were members of the Department of English, future directors could be drawn from other participating departments. In fact, the Knight Writing Program's current director, Jonathan Monroe, is a member of the Department of Comparative Literature, an appropriate choice for an interdisciplinary writing program; Monroe is indeed developing still further its interdisciplinary nature and activities. Of course, wisdom comes slowly: like Professor Rosenberg in 1965, Rick Bogel and I were new to the university and had quickly to enlarge the scope of our vision; I have, however, remained with the Writing Program for fourteen years, ample time in which to become appreciative of its institutional situation. Furthermore, working with the enriched vision of writing as embedded throughout the university, the two subsequent Knight Writing Program directors have chosen to stay on for repeat terms to use their growing insights and achieve their goals: Harry Shaw, who followed Professor Bogel, directed for seven years, and Jonathan Monroe is now beginning his second term in order to continue the new directions he envisions, being primarily concerned with writing in the disciplines at all levels of the curriculum, including especially further development in upper-division courses. Such involvement of faculty throughout the disciplines is crucial to the essence of the Writing Program as a university-wide project and remains a major reason for drawing its directors from the faculty of participating departments.

What, in 1982, did the new Writing Program under its new administrative structure do in areas that had become problematic and to make possible an improved situation?

TA and Faculty Training as Interdisciplinary Involvement

The Writing Program with its new full-time administration and substantial funding could and continues to take seriously, and act on, its responsibility to make sure that writing be taught and taught well, and that TAs be carefully selected and systematically trained, lapses in such training having been noted and commented on as a major source of weak teaching in the Holmes Report. As I have written elsewhere,

In Cornell's writing program, newly reorganized and reestablished in 1982, we could attend to the charges the university's task force had agreed on: we established guidelines for the teaching of writing in all seminars and monitored their observance; we set up training programs and faculty incentives; we wrote and published a handbook, *Teaching Prose*. We added Writing to the title Freshman Seminars. With every step we concentrated on eliminating merely "additive" writing, so that the seminars would truly offer writing in the university, or writing across the curriculum in both senses: "cognitively based (on the idea of writing as a mode of learning) or rhetorically

based (on the idea of introducing students to the discourse communities of various disciplines)” (McLeod 342). (Gottschalk 2)

Concentrating on the training of TAs clearly provided one of the best ways to work with departments, and the training programs for graduate students at once became mandatory and extensive. “At once” is perhaps the wrong phrase: administrators soon learn that change happens gradually, that one achieves best success through constantly and considerably (but one hopes irresistibly) applied pressure. It’s generally fatal to tell people what to do, but most don’t mind being encouraged to do what they believe (or come to believe) in. Thus, converting resistance to required participation in training programs into normal expectation has been a matter of working steadily over years to insist on the value of training, to gradually develop ideas about how TAs and faculty may be involved in training, and to ensure that the training and teaching support are in fact the best that can be provided. And, of course, no amount of insistence on training would work if departments did not find participation to be in their own best interests, both because graduate students benefit from learning how to teach and from developing their own courses, and because the Writing Program offers considerable additional financial support to TAs for their training and teaching.

All three directors of the Knight Writing Program and I, with the invaluable assistance of James Slevin (Department of English, Georgetown), have devoted maximum attention to developing, regularly modifying, and—we believe—improving a six-week required course, “Teaching Writing,” which is taken by about eighty new TAs each year in either the summer or the fall. In a regularization and expansion of the former summer Emphasis on Writing program, thirty of these new TAs also work as interns with a faculty mentor in a six-week summer session writing course; the summer stipend provided through the Writing Program for this internship is much appreciated. In the training course the TAs read in the field and benefit from speakers ranging from experienced TAs and faculty throughout the disciplines to guest lecturers such as David Bartholomae and Nancy Sommers, all in order to provide varied perspectives and to indicate the seriousness with which attention to writing is regarded throughout Cornell and at other institutions. TAs also receive detailed responses to their proposed assignments and syllabi. During the year, in a continuation of the effort to elicit collaborative attention to teaching and writing, TAs work with faculty mentors in their department, an arrangement insisted upon by the university at the founding of the new Writing Program. The mentorship works only as well as the faculty make it work, but in many departments that is very well indeed. In some it works less well, and we regularly seek ways to improve the assistance TAs receive from faculty other than Writing Program administrators. A recent, and very successful, optional peer collaboration program developed by Jonathan Monroe encourages TAs, in return for a token stipend, to develop projects for consulting and working with each other. Another optional program allows TAs to consult about how to respond

to student essays with experienced Writing Workshop tutors, usually undergraduates who have themselves taken seminars and who have seen many essays on which instructors have commented (not always well). In other words, with a wider vision, the Writing Program administration coordinates, make use of, and takes part in the previously more isolated efforts of the summer programs and the Writing Workshop; it allows for and encourages regular development of new learning opportunities. My own interests as Director of Freshman Writing Seminars have been expanding to include the professional development of TAs as future professors, thanks in part to the incentive of a local five-university Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) project.

For faculty, the second director of the Writing Program, Harry Shaw, along with James Slevin, developed the Faculty Seminar in Writing Instruction, a summer-long workshop for a small number of faculty members. The Writing Program consistently works to encourage faculty to enrich their work as mentors, to assist with Teaching Writing, to return as alums to the Faculty Seminar—in other words, it attends daily to the interaction of faculty with TAs as teaching mentors and to the development of faculty as teachers themselves. Constant attention to TA and faculty training is essential to providing well-taught writing seminars, and to helping graduate students and faculty alike to reflect on the place of language in their disciplines and the place of writing in teaching and learning—that focus on the inextricably intertwined nature of writing and content that has for so long been so central to the university's vision. The ultimate goal, of course, is that undergraduates throughout the university's curriculum should experience writing as a vital part of their learning experience, their way of knowing and being part of the world.

Working with Clientele from the Colleges

An aspect of the program that touched all colleges and participating departments and that had been a source of continuing and immediate aggravation has already been described: registration into seminars. Part of the current ease and satisfaction with that process is due to the marvels computerization can perform: we developed a customized computer program that gives all students optimal placement in seminars. But in addition, given our independent, centralized position, we want all seminars to fill equally and we work to be sure they do—it is to everyone's benefit to ensure that all sections fill with equal numbers of students, to ensure we aren't financing courses in which lamentably few students can be interested, to ensure that students are attracted to courses in a range of subjects. We work to help students realize that learning to write doesn't mean learning "English." Rather than opening up new sections of popular courses, then, we now encourage and enable students to register for alternate choices. In a lightbulb moment, we decided to abandon quotas for each college in each seminar: they were a headache for everyone involved and prevented students from getting courses they wanted.

Encouragingly, most seminars do attract students from every college. Because the Writing Program, along with the chair of each participating department, reviews all proposed Freshman Writing Seminars and staff, the Writing Program can try to meet the interests of various constituencies and offer students a wide variety of topics from which to choose, at the same time giving able instructors the opportunity to teach writing in subjects genuinely significant to them and to their students.

Quality Control: Interdisciplinary Finances and Incentives

What else do we watch for, that could not be attended to in the previous system? Because we must be concerned about the quality of TAs being proposed by departments, and because we must, with writing-in-the-discipline seminars, constantly ensure that writing is actually being taught, and being taught well, it is not wise to provide additional TAs to departments where the teaching of writing and concern for teaching seem neglected. (We review the evaluations, which the Program developed and provides, that come in from all instructors at the end of each semester; faculty mentors and departmental administrators should be alerted both when TAs have not taught well and when they teach exceptionally well.) Our financial support for TAs should be decreased if TAs receive inadequate faculty mentorship or if departments decrease their contribution of faculty-taught (and TA taught) seminars. The Program cannot afford to do otherwise in a program in which all are interdependent: the university's faculty members committed themselves to teaching seminars and to assisting graduate students; faculty participation is crucial to the health of a program based on faculty understanding of writing as embedded in the disciplines. Faculty participation is crucial to the health of undergraduate education, and, of course, to the development of graduate students as teachers, who look to faculty as models of what is important in academic life and for support in their work.

In many areas, then, the problems that triggered a review of the teaching of first-year writing in the early 1980's have been solved or at least systematically addressed in an on-going and constantly mentored process made possible because the program is run by administrators who do not report to one participating department, who are interested in and support the diverse views and methods of the participating departments, who view the whole on-going process of integrating writing into teaching and into the disciplines. Consistency and patience are crucial, given that many changes can be accomplished only over a long period of time. We must try to be sure that participating departments work with and as the Writing Program, not for or against it, because this is the only way in which the Writing Program actually exists. We must try to attend to perceptions and needs in all six colleges—not an easy process, as many readers well understand. Rumors still surface that students in some colleges believe they are treated differently from those in the College of Arts and Sciences, but we try to keep in touch with those rumors and to take

steps to dispel them: for instance, we systematically publicize the methods for enrolling students in seminars—the random method and the high success rate (90% get one of their first three choices, about 60% get their first choice). Basically, a writing program can never take for granted that the program is working and that it has “got it right.” A writing program is, ultimately, its instructors and its students, not its administrators.

The Imperilment of Writing Programs—Two Recurrent Problems

This seems an appropriate moment to speculate that Cornell’s Writing Program, and probably any university-wide writing program, no matter how secure and successful, may well have to undergo cyclical evaluation and revision similar to that of the two occasions I’ve already described. I can explain this speculative conclusion by looking at two problems that surfaced with the Holmes and Sturgeon Reports. These problems can regularly be suppressed but I believe they inevitably re-emerge and cause fresh, though not new, distress with a writing program. One problem is the tendency, despite one’s best intentions and beliefs, to relapse into the position that students’ writing problems would be pretty much solved if students could just take a good basic writing course, meaning one in which form and grammar dominate; another is the impulse to seek one solution for a learning process which must take place over time and which is actually everybody’s responsibility throughout the four years students spend in college.

Tendency 1. The Rules Course as Solution Versus the Writing Course as Preparation

Examine Cornell’s own process in 1981. The Sturgeon Report pointed out that the university’s Holmes Report had not in fact found anything wrong with the Freshman Seminars when they were well taught in what we now call a “writing across the curriculum” system; in fact, the Holmes Report itself had explicitly confirmed its belief that “exposition cannot be taught . . . without instruction in reading and without asking analytical questions challenging enough to make students struggle as they work their way to understanding—an understanding arrived at in part through the process of writing” (39). Nevertheless, the Holmes Report suggested that the first semester of composition ought to be taught as composition skills, in the English department, abandoning the “writing in the humanities” approach. The Sturgeon Report appropriately pointed out the inconsistency and added that “To be sure, these students need continuing instruction and practice in constructing sentences and paragraphs; but that would be an essential part of all the courses we propose here. What such students most conspicuously lack, and need lots of practice to acquire, is skill in conceiving and organizing arguments of some sophistication about a complex subject matter” (9). Professor James Morgan Hart had said as much in 1912, the Cornell faculty again in 1965.

Despite this understanding of writing taught in disciplines, faculty who have never themselves taught a seminar, or who are struggling with the term papers submitted in their courses, sometimes wonder if a seminar offered by the Department of Government called something like “Gender and Politics in Latin America” really teaches writing “skills” appropriate for their own classes. When students arrive in their upper-level courses not knowing how to write the required research paper, faculty may conclude that the nature of the writing classes is at fault, rather than simply blaming, as they might otherwise, a particular teacher of Composition 101. Faculty faced with failed writing assignments in their courses tend to focus on the most easily identified surface errors—the misspelled words and the punctuation errors—and to believe that if enough rules had been taught, the student would have been prepared to write their particular papers. They may narrow the idea further and believe that if the student took a first-year course explicitly dedicated to “rules for writing essays in economics,” future teachers of that student would have no further need to worry about his or her writing.

Of course, neither the teacher of Composition 101 nor the teacher of “Gender and Politics in Latin America” can actually succeed in preparing every student to write every kind of paper required in other disciplines, or to avoid all errors in spelling and mechanics. Research, as teachers of writing know, has pointed “to a relationship between grammatical competence and a writer’s control over the ideas being expressed. Since each new course immerses students in new, unfamiliar ideas, the quality of students’ writing, predictably, degenerates,” a process remedied only by having the student work through multiple writing tasks or drafts (Bean 64). Writing, in other words, tends to fall apart when a student encounters new ways of thinking, new ways of asking questions, new terminology. The student who wrote very well in one course may write quite badly in another until through the very act of using, in writing, the new concepts, the new methods, and the new vocabulary, she or he gains control over this new field. Until then the student may even blunder into new surface errors that did not exist in the arena in which he or she previously had written comfortably and clearly. Furthermore, as Keith Hjortshoj, Director of Writing in the Majors at Cornell, likes to point out, the student papers we don’t like will almost always still be poor papers even with the surface mechanics tidied up. The real writing problems lie in the student’s ability to handle the deeper issues, questions, and methods of a subject. Teachers of any kind of writing class know that students must practice writing in every course, every discipline, and that if a student has not been shown examples of what is expected, has not learned and written often enough about a subject, has not been given an opportunity for repeated and increasingly complex practice, he or she may well write a poor paper, no matter what excellent teaching of rules for writing in a discipline preceded his or her taking the course. A writing course can, however, provide preparation: it can help students to realize how integral writing is to learning; it can make them aware that they need to examine conventions and methods, to examine the requirements of occasion, of audi-

ence, subject, and voice, each time they begin a writing task. The preparation may be, in other words, teaching students to anticipate and inquire into all the complicated issues that will continue to enter into writing well. Paradoxically, then, the transferable lesson of introductory writing courses may be that not everything is transferable. New situations will demand new kinds of “good writing” and that the writer who has risen to sophisticated levels in one field may well fall back into novice habits in a new one. No one “rules” course can provide final instruction; no one writing course of any kind, in fact, can provide final instruction, which leads us to the next subject—

Tendency 2. One-Time Solutions Versus an Ongoing Learning Process

It’s natural enough to hope to make someone else responsible for unpleasant, messy difficulties that we are not certain how to clean up. Teachers look to first-year writing courses when their students need help with writing—which leads to the other problem that regularly resurfaces, namely relegating responsibility for student writing to one program. “Lots of practice” is what students need *throughout* the four years of their college education. The Holmes Report had concluded that

it is important to emphasize this *general* responsibility for the quality of student writing skills. The notion that the development of writing skills can be delegated to a particular course, program, or department which can then be held responsible for students’ writing deficiencies, has some purchase at Cornell: but it is a myth. The Commission insists that writing is not just a problem to be addressed in a special sequence of courses, or just in the freshman year. Good writing is always intimately related to a good command of the substantive content of a subject. Good writing requires continuous reinforcement by frequent exercises which receive detailed critical commentary at all levels of instruction. (20)

According to the Commission’s survey, after the first year students were asked for little writing: 43% of courses after the freshman year required no expository, technical/ scientific/ laboratory, or creative writing pieces (7); when students did write they got little guidance (8). Because of these figures and conclusions, the first of the Holmes Report’s recommendations to the provost was “That you exhort the faculty to recognize its general responsibility to foster good writing” and the second was “That you move the colleges to mandate a writing requirement for all their students” so that “Every student graduating from Cornell should take two courses in the Freshman Composition Curriculum . . . , and at least two upper-level courses containing a substantial amount of—as well as instruction in—writing” (11). To that end the fifth recommendation was “That you establish and fund a University Bureau for Professional Writing” (16) specifically designed to address development of

upper-level writing courses, to address technical and business writing needs (23), and to help faculty develop ways to include and work on writing (20).

Despite these recommendations, Freshman Writing Seminars have remained officially and primarily responsible for the quality of student writing skills. The idea of a "University Bureau for Professional Writing" died, I believe, immediately, since the College of Arts and Sciences specifically did not take up responsibility for anything but the first-year courses when it addressed the Holmes Report's proposals. Two colleges did, however, take up the challenge to improve the teaching of writing throughout their students' careers: in 1984 the College of Industrial and Labor Relations added a requirement that students take an upper-level writing course (a special ILR writing-intensive course or Expository Writing, a 200-level English department course). The College of Engineering began its own communications program in 1987 with a full-time director, Steve Youra, and (currently) three full-time teachers of writing; in 1990 it voted in the requirement that all its students in addition to two Freshman Writing Seminars must take a writing intensive engineering class or an upper-level stand-alone writing course offered by its Communications Program. The Engineering Communications Program offers excellent upper-level courses in technical writing in addition to working with TAs and faculty to develop writing intensive versions of their courses. In the College of Arts and Sciences, the new Writing Program, because of excellent directorship and the genuine support and understanding of the University's administration, from deans through the president, was able to take a major step on its own in 1988 toward developing writing efforts in the college after the first year: Writing in the Majors was begun on the initiative of the Writing Program's second director, Harry Shaw, through an award from then President Rhodes's fund for educational initiatives. While yet limited in scope, and while the college has not instituted required upper-level writing work, Writing in the Majors reaches many students (about 730 a year), TAs, and faculty, and the program should grow. The College of Human Ecology by formal vote on March 12, 1981, had gone on record as "recognizing the faculty's 'fundamental responsibility . . . to require a high level of exposition, either written or oral, in every course'" (Holmes Report 10), but it has not added requirements for upper-level writing courses; nor has the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences developed such requirements, although many of its faculty work on the integration of writing into their upper-level courses, and its Department of Communications offers upper-level writing courses.

The need for continued attention to writing by faculty "in the majors" has, of course, far from disappeared since 1981. I would not be surprised if a new study showed that many students continue to write few papers after the first year and receive little commentary on their writing when they do. Further, the situation persists at Cornell as at most places that when faculty do have students write papers, they feel frustrated because students need more help than they expected would be the case, or they find that the assignments did not go well: no University Bureau of Professional Writing, as proposed by the Holmes

Report, has been developed to help faculty in the disciplines understand how writing and learning develop hand in hand, or how to work on writing assignments. It also continues to be true that faculty members quite rightly believe that students need to learn to write in their disciplines. I worry about what may be an inevitable, and cyclical reaction—the impulse to place responsibility on Freshman Writing Seminars as the one arena in which needed skills should be taught, and the impulse to solve writing problems by “getting back to basics.” I worry about a possible reactionary return to the (already discredited) idea of decentralization—put students into specialized first-year “writing for engineers/ science/ statistics, etc.” courses from the start; link a “writing section” to a required first-year survey course, thus “killing” (indeed) two birds with one stone. The insights and carefully wrought recommendations of the earlier two processes that each time sought to situate the writing program thoroughly *in* the university might thus come to naught.

Students at Cornell, students anywhere, do not benefit from repeated tampering with first-year writing courses, making them more field specific or more skills-oriented, more literature, less literature. Students benefit most from the university’s providing a wide variety of experiences with writing; they benefit most from continued attention to writing provided by faculty in the disciplines throughout all four years of their academic experience. As they take courses on subjects of increasing sophistication, it becomes increasingly important that they be given writing to which faculty thoughtfully respond. No first year course can prepare students to write in their fourth year at the level of complexity which is then expected. Preparation starts in the first year; it must continue in each year after that as the student matures and learns.

The Proper Arena for Writing and a Writing Program?

Just as important as a writing program’s efforts, then, are those of a university itself to find lasting ways in which to avoid targeting first-year writing courses as the culprit and cure for inevitable writing problems. The appropriate arena for attention is upper-level courses. Cornell has not yet provided what it gave first-year writing: a decentralized but central, independent administration that with an equitable eye might encourage, supervise, and maintain attention to and development of upper-level writing in the disciplines. Possibly it is time for us to undertake something in the line of what the Holmes Report originally proposed, namely the University Bureau for Professional Writing, which was given two functions:

1. To initiate and foster ways to involve the whole University in improving the quality of writing at Cornell.
 - a. To cooperate with the faculty in establishing and strengthening subject-matter courses that will provide upper-classmen and graduate students with increased opportunities to improve their writing skills.

- b. To assist faculty members who seek to enhance the writing component in their courses or to improve their skills in the evaluation and instruction of writing.
 - c. To train TAs who grade papers.
2. To promote, develop, and implement upper-level course formats appropriate to students' postgraduate writing needs.

Currently, these two functions of the proposed Professional Writing Bureau are addressed piecemeal, an approach that actually can work if all colleges contribute their pieces and if these are collaboratively coordinated. In the College of Arts and Sciences, Writing in the Majors has many good effects; it is a widely admired initiative and one the college intends to develop as much as possible. In the College of Agriculture and Life Science, there is much interest in teaching. As the Writing Program's Director of Freshman Writing Seminars I regularly address TAs, at the College's invitation, on how to assign and respond to writing, and consult occasionally with some faculty; this year the college is opening up discussion with the director of the Knight Writing Program about writing in the discipline efforts. The most officially integrated effort is probably that of the College of Engineering, whose centralized upper-level communications program has already been described. Perhaps a successful alternative to establishing a university "Professional Writing Bureau" might be to provide all colleges with the mandate, and funding, to set up and maintain upper-level communications programs that will reach all their students, such as Engineering's or the College of Arts and Science's Writing in the Majors. Unfortunately, these days of reduced funding make such an university-wide, costly, initiative unlikely.

Looking Ahead

No writing program can afford to view its situation as secure and its problems as solved, no writing program will be able to consider doing so, until the utopian day when all faculty across the curriculum are willing to *be* the writing program—to be “vitaly concerned with language acquisition, with learning processes, with pedagogy, and with practice . . . with the disorder and confusion from which forms of knowledge, texts, and meanings eventually emerge” (Hjortshoj 503). With limited attention to the development of upper-level writing practices, practices which involve and educate faculty, TAs, and students alike, first-year writing at Cornell and at any institution will probably receive repeated and critical attention from client colleges and faculty. It therefore behooves a writing program that concentrates primarily on first-year courses to take steps in its own interest and in the interest of students as writers to help faculty throughout the institution to consider and integrate the uses of language in upper-level courses. Cornell's Writing Program has begun to do so with the growing Writing in the Majors program, finding that faculty can be enthusiastically engaged in examining new and more successful ways

to teach their courses through increased attention to language. Perhaps the time has come for the Program in its usual mode as decentralized center to expand its purview and to work with other colleges that are not yet satisfied with their efforts to keep attention successfully focused on the writing development of students after the first year. If, as Cornell has acknowledged throughout its long history, and as Keith Hjortshoj, the director of Writing in the Majors, has written out of his experience here with teachers across the curriculum, “nothing is more essential to academic life than the use of written language, as a means to the ends of communication and the construction of knowledge” (499), we must make this effort.

Notes

¹Students in the Hotel School do not take Freshman Writing Seminars, but they must take writing courses offered by their own school.

²Edward Corbett has described the Cornell School of Rhetoric at length in “The Cornell School of Rhetoric.” The School of Rhetoric is an informal designation given to a program that was located in the Department of Public Speaking, usually referred to by Corbett as the Department of Speech and Drama, a later name. A bit of history: According to the university catalogues, the Department of Public Speaking was originally located in English as “Oratory”; in 1903/04 “Oratory” became a separate department; and in 1914-15 “Oratory” became the Department of Public Speaking. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, the department offered courses in drama in increasing numbers, with the result that it was finally renamed “Speech and Drama.” According to Corbett, “sometime in 1964 the speech part of the Cornell department (but not the drama part) was voted out of existence by action of the College of Arts and Sciences” (12). The university’s catalogues first used the new name, Theatre Arts, however, in 1967-68. Reflecting still further evolution the department will be called the Department of Theatre, Film, and Dance beginning 1997/98.

³In 1915-16 Professor Strunk began teaching an advanced course called “English Usage and Style” that continued for many years. Presumably he found his little handbook useful for that course.

⁴The seven colleges/schools are the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; the College of Art, Architecture, and Planning; the College of Engineering; the School of Hotel Administration; the College of Human Ecology; the School of Industrial and Labor Relations; and the College of Arts and Sciences.

⁵Physicists at Cornell have displayed a long-standing and continuing interest in writing, as witness David Mermin who has regularly critiqued scientific writing; and as witness the outstanding involvement of physics in Cornell’s Writing in the Majors program.

⁶The phrase, “decentralized center,” was coined by the current Writing Program director, Jonathan Monroe, as the name of a talk he gave at the Writ-

ing Across the Curriculum Second National Conference in Charleston, S.C., February 2, 1995.

⁷The Writing Program became the John S. Knight Writing Program in 1986 when the first director, Fredric V. Bogel, successfully helped the program to receive a major endowment from the Knight Foundation.

⁸I have since become Director of Freshman Seminars, a distinct position that allows the Director of the Writing Program to concentrate on the integration of writing into the university at all levels, especially with Writing in the Majors, and to concentrate on financial aspects of the Writing Program.

⁹See Gottschalk's "Training TAs Across the Curriculum to Teach Writing: Embracing Diversity" for a fuller description of some aspects of TA training for Freshman Writing Seminars at Cornell.

¹⁰Professor Monroe initially developed the project as a means of improving the teaching of teaching assistants whom he was supervising in the Department of Comparative Literature. When he became director of the Writing Program, he was able to implement it on a program-wide level.

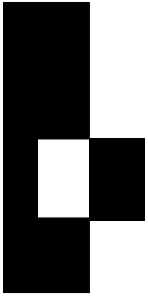
¹¹As part of a five-university FIPSE project on Preparing Future Professors (PFP), I and graduate students who have taught Freshman Writing Seminars have been working with the departments of English, history, and government on kinds of professional support their TAs might appreciate.

¹²And if the composition courses have been skills oriented, the faculty wonder if perhaps they need specific contents—see the 1965-66 discussion.

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Writing in the Disciplines, First-Year Composition, and the Research Paper

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For years, the research-paper assignment has been associated with the “service course” concept of first-year composition — the idea that the course, in part, helps to prepare students for the writing assignments they will later receive in other academic disciplines. But until the last decade or two, the composition teachers who gave this assignment almost invariably were blissfully ignorant of the nature of research and writing in those other disciplines. Since about 1980, however, writing-in-the-disciplines researchers have accumulated a great deal of knowledge about the ways that advanced students and publishing scholars conduct research and produce scholarly writing in their fields. This knowledge should have profound implications for the future of the research-paper assignment in first-year composition — but not everyone agrees as to what those implications are.

Some compositionists have argued that because writing-in-the-disciplines research has demonstrated that research techniques and research-based writing conventions are always uniquely situated, first-year composition’s “generic” research-paper assignment has little or no carry-over value and should be abolished. Richard Larson, for example, has written that to include a research-paper assignment in first-year composition “is quite often to pander to the wishes of faculty in other disciplines that we spare them a responsibility that they must accept” (“The Research Paper” 816). Similarly, Stephen North argues for a model of research-writing instruction which abolishes the generic research paper in first year composition, and instead, “moves research writing away from Freshman English and toward the disciplines, where it belongs” (19).

But if writing-in-the-disciplines knowledge can be the basis for suggesting the *abolition* of the research-paper assignment in first-year composition, it can also be the basis for *improving* that assignment. If the assignment is intended largely to prepare students for academic writing in other disciplines, then surely our increased knowledge about the nature of academic writing in those disciplines should allow us to design more thoughtful research-paper assignments and to help students complete them more successfully. In this essay I will argue that the research-paper assignment *can* help students learn to negotiate academic discourse and begin to select academic disciplines to

pursue. I will also examine the relative merits of encouraging composition students to produce “generic” research papers or encouraging them to adopt genre conventions of more specific academic disciplines. In doing so, I will also argue against the criticisms of the research paper from those who reject entirely the “service course” rationale and its disciplinary-writing implications and instead favor almost total emphasis on helping the student find his or her “authentic voice” — a criticism heard recently from Kurt Spellmeyer, but one which goes back to Ken Macrorie and even to Richard Young’s description of “a preoccupation with the research paper” as one characteristic of the current-traditional paradigm (31).

Charles Bazerman and the Research Paper

Much of my defense of the research-paper assignment stems from perhaps the best-known book examining research-based writing in other disciplines, Charles Bazerman’s *Shaping Written Knowledge*. In this examination of research-based writing in the sciences and of experimental-report writing in the social sciences, Bazerman argues that although many people, including more than a few scientists, believe that “scientific writing is simply a transparent transmitter of natural facts” (14), in actuality “persuasion is at the heart of science, not at the unrespectable fringe” (321). Furthermore, Bazerman points out, the very fact that scientific writing is widely regarded as a “transparent transmitter of natural facts” attests to its rhetorical success in that readers have become so fully persuaded by scientific discourse that they view the claims of that discourse not as claims at all, but as facts (14). When we read a scientific article as a transcription of facts, we read it exactly as its authors wish us to. But “the appearance of reality projected in scientific texts is itself a social construction” (295), and scientific writing readily lends itself to rhetorical analysis, as Selzer’s *Understanding Scientific Prose* demonstrates.

Thus, those of our students who are destined for the sciences or the experimental-report social sciences will someday be practicing a rhetoric which is powerful precisely because many readers do not perceive it as rhetorical, and thus read it wholly uncritically. Clearly, practitioners of such a powerful rhetoric should be acutely aware of their rhetorical choices. But these students are likely to be initiated into their disciplines by professors who share the reluctance of many scientists to recognize the rhetorical nature of their discourse and to consciously attend to their own writing. Thus, these students would greatly benefit from being introduced to research-based writing in first-year composition, where such writing will be presented within a rhetorical context. And the same holds true for students who are bound for other disciplines but who, as lay readers, will still encounter scientific discourse and thus will need to apply critical-reading skills to that discourse.

But while a research-paper assignment in first-year composition may help students prepare for writing in other disciplines, we should be wary of assuming that a knowledge of standard composition-class rhetoric is adequate prepa-

ration in itself. In particular, we should discourage students from assuming that what works in first-year composition will always transfer, unaltered, to assignments in other disciplines. In other words, students must learn to recognize the unique rhetorical situation implicit in any writing assignment, and composition teachers must restrain themselves from championing a generic rhetoric and inveighing against every discourse convention in another discipline as mere jargonizing. Bazerman warns against “the attempt to reestablish rhetoric as the queen of the sciences” and adds that rather than issuing “broad statements of resistance against disciplinarity,” compositionists should instead seek to provide “detailed knowledge,” including knowledge of unique rhetorical situations in various disciplines (“Second Stage” 211).

Research supports Bazerman’s warnings. Several studies have concluded that teachers in other academic disciplines evaluate student writing in fundamentally different ways than do those in composition (Shamoon and Schwegler; Faigley and Hansen). Other studies have noted the difficulties students encounter when they attempt to import procedures which had worked well for them in the past into rhetorical situations in which those procedures are inappropriate (Marsella, Hilgers, and McLaren 179; Nelson 380-81, 384-85; Sutton 232, 497-98, 586). Mike Rose, in fact, has argued persuasively that inappropriate attempts to apply “rigid rules” to changing rhetorical situations are a primary reason for writer’s block among students. So when teaching the research paper, as at other times, composition teachers must help students develop the ability to assess the unique rhetorical situation implicit in any given assignment and to adjust their strategies to meet the demands of that situation.

MacDonald’s Continuum and the Research Paper

The dangers of overgeneralized rules notwithstanding, *some* knowledge acquired from completing research-paper assignments in composition classes undoubtedly transfers profitably to writing assignments in other disciplines. Near the end of *Professional Academic Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Susan MacDonald identifies four points on a continuum writers must move through as they progress from novices to disciplinary insiders:

1. Nonacademic writing
2. Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others’ opinions, and learning how to write with authority
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge
4. Expert, insider prose (187)

This continuum concept, while perhaps an oversimplification, makes intuitive sense, and I will be referring to it throughout the remainder of this essay.

MacDonald suggests that assignments in first-year composition should involve the first two of these four “points” without “venturing further” (187).

And if there is a kind of writing which corresponds to MacDonald's second "point," then MacDonald's continuum suggests that the research-paper assignment, while not sufficient by itself to prepare students to produce academic writing in other disciplines, nevertheless can (almost literally) move students closer to being able to produce such writing. But given the warnings we have already encountered about the uniqueness of rhetorical situations in different academic disciplines, does such a thing as "generalized academic writing" exist?

Many researchers, including some prominently associated with discipline-specific writing, would agree that it does, and that learning the conventions of such writing can help prepare students to handle assignments in other academic disciplines later in college. Greg Colomb, in a 1996 CCCC postconvention workshop, described transcribing students' written classroom discussions on Daedalus Interchange, then requiring that each student select a topic which allowed him or her to cite a classmate's comment or position from the transcript and to disagree with or modify that comment or position. As Colomb pointed out, this assignment forces students to situate their writing within an ongoing discussion by a discourse community, clearly a "generalized academic writing" concept. Colomb's advocacy of this assignment is especially significant because in collaboration with Joseph Williams, he has written articles about the difficulties previously successful student writers encounter when they must write as novices in academic communities new to them ("The University"), as well as about the need to teach genre conventions explicitly to newcomers to an academic community ("The Case"). Even Bazerman, who has done as much as anyone to illuminate discipline-specific practices and who has warned against uncritical application of generalized rhetorical principles to specific genres, nevertheless seems to favor the "generalized academic writing" approach to research-based writing in first-year composition. In an e-mail to me, he distinguishes between "the kinds of consumer of research information roles that entering students are most likely to find engaging" and the roles as producers of such information that they may later fill as more advanced students or published scholars. His e-mail message appears to argue both that we should require only that first-year composition students learn to read and write about published research, and that learning to do this will help to prepare those students for later work as disciplinary "insiders."

Toward Point Three on the Continuum: Field Research and Swales's "Moves"

Some composition teachers advocate nudging their students a bit further toward point three on MacDonald's continuum: "novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge" (187). Most of these teachers are less concerned with pushing students toward disciplinary "insider" status than with helping them to recognize that not all research must involve the library—a concept which should be obvious but which, until the recent increase in awareness of writing in the disciplines, had been obscured by

composition teachers' traditional alliance with English departments. In recent years, a number of articles (Daemrich, for example) and at least one book (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein) have focused on engaging composition students in conducting original field research. Besides familiarizing students with another research method, the field-research option also promotes positive attitudes toward the research-paper assignment by presenting research as a potentially social activity rather than the duty of the stereotypical solitary scholar, slogging through a stack of dusty, ancient texts. It also encourages students to define their roles more ambitiously, as creators of new knowledge rather than mere summarizers wholly reliant on their sources for data and interpretations. It may be unwise to require all first-year composition students to conduct original research, since some may not yet be ready or willing to assume such a role. But composition teachers should strongly consider at least making the option available to those students who feel ready for it, because research has shown both that an ambitious approach to writing assignment correlates strongly with successful completion of that assignment (Flower and Hayes; Greene; Kantz) and that professors throughout the disciplines prefer that their students adopt the role of "professional-in-training" rather than "text processor" when completing research-based writing assignments (Walvoord and McCarthy 8-11; Schwegler and Shamoon, while using different terms, make the same point).

Disciplinary-writing researcher John Swales provides another means of both nudging students toward point three on MacDonald's continuum and encouraging them to adopt a more ambitious task definition. Swales has found that in journal articles written in experimental-report form, authors typically employ four "moves" in the introduction. First, they establish the significance and centrality of the research area. Second, they selectively summarize previous research. Third, they establish the need for their own study, perhaps by pointing out an area not yet covered by previous research, highlighting a possible methodological limitation of that research, or suggesting a different interpretation of the results of that research. Finally, they suggest that their own study will rectify the problem just mentioned. Swales adds that the order of these steps may vary and that the fourth step may be left implicit (*Aspects*). Of course, most first-year composition students lack the time, sophistication, and tenacity to research thoroughly enough to state confidently that a certain area has not been covered by previous researchers, nor are they generally sophisticated enough to spot methodological limitations or produce alternative interpretations of results. But the format can be modified to accommodate most first-year students' limitations while still encouraging those students to define their task more ambitiously.

For example, a student of mine recently began her research paper by describing the power of the news media to influence the way the public perceives certain groups of people (Swales's Move One); next, she summarized the published results of a study of ways teenagers are portrayed by the news media, as well as the published findings of a nationwide survey of teenagers regarding

their perceptions of their image in the media (Move Two); then she questioned whether in northeast Wisconsin, where she lives and attends college, local news portrayals and teen attitudes toward media images would mirror those described in the national publications (Move Three); and finally she introduced her own paper, which supplemented a modest amount of library research with three strands of field research: examination of local television and news coverage over a one-week period, an interview with a friend who worked at a local television station, and a small-scale local replication of the national survey. My student did not produce a paper miraculously superior to her previous essays, one worthy of publication in a scholarly journal. But she did learn to view herself as an original researcher, creating new knowledge; she learned to test previous researchers' claims, thus approaching previously published works not as unquestionable authorities but as products of other rhetorical situations, an approach composition researchers have described as crucial to successful research-based writing (Brent; Kantz); she learned to situate her own findings within an ongoing written conversation; and she learned to limit her field of investigation and to avoid overgeneralization from limited data. These lessons should serve her well as she faces assignments in other disciplines.

Point Three on the Continuum and the Explicit Teaching of Genre

This use of Swales's "moves" brings up a more general issue: should first-year composition students be explicitly taught the conventions of various genres of academic writing? Such teaching has been criticized for several reasons. Some have argued against it on pragmatic grounds. Aviva Freedman, for example, argues that students tacitly know far more than they can directly express about genre, and that those students exposed to direct instruction about genre may repress their wealth of tacit knowledge and rely on the far more limited information they have been directly taught. Thus, to Freedman, "The danger in explicit teaching is that we may thereby prevent our students from enacting what they know tacitly" (235). If Freedman is correct, then genre conventions should not be directly taught, because a number of researchers have concluded that most genre knowledge is acquired not through direct instruction but through immersion in an academic community and its discourse (Bazerman, "From Cultural Criticism" 63-64; Berkenkotter and Huckin, *Genre Knowledge* 7; Berkenkotter and Huckin, "Rethinking Genre" 498; Freedman 229-30, 239; Haas 77-78). Most knowledge acquired through such immersion is surely tacit knowledge.

But Freedman presents no evidence that direct instruction suppresses enactment of tacit knowledge, and it appears that most analysts of academic discourse, including many of those just cited, do favor at least some explicit teaching of genre conventions (Bazerman, "From Cultural Criticism"; Berkenkotter and Huckin, *Genre Knowledge* 163; Fahnestock; Swales, *Genre Analysis* 1; Williams and Colomb, "The Case"). Several textbooks, the best

known being Bazerman's *The Informed Writer*, openly attempt to familiarize first-year composition students with certain conventions of various kinds of academic discourse. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine a first-year composition student with tacit knowledge of, for example, Swales's "moves." And while a slavish adherence to these "moves" or to any other genre convention could, as Freedman warns, cause students to ignore their own tacit knowledge of alternatives—one envisions all those students who ignore their best ideas in order to assure that their essays conform to a five-paragraph, three-part-thesis requirement—surely many discourse conventions may be taught as options to be added to the student's repertoire, not as the *only* acceptable form writing may assume in first-year composition.

Spellmeyer, the Student's "Authentic Voice," and the Research Paper

But the teaching of disciplinary genres has been criticized on other grounds besides purely pragmatic ones—in fact, on grounds which criticize such instruction as altogether *too* pragmatic. Kurt Spellmeyer, for example, has argued that "the prevailing tradition of discipline-specific writing instruction encourages both conformity and submission" from composition students ("A Common Ground" 266), and that when those emphasizing discipline-specific writing instruction use the term "empowerment," they really mean "pragmatic accommodation" ("A Common Ground" 267).

But while Spellmeyer's criticisms may be valid regarding certain teachers in certain courses, from the perspective of writing in the disciplines and first-year composition they may be something of a straw-man argument. Writing-in-the-disciplines adherents, well aware of the wide range of academic genres a first-year composition student may have to deal with in the future, are unlikely to force those students to venture so deeply into any one genre as to require slavish imitation. The only first-year composition teachers likely to demand "conformity and submission" to a particular kind of academic discourse are those English-department fixtures, the evangelical disciples of literature, professors whose goal in first-year composition is to teach students to explicate *belles lettres*. Writing-in-the-disciplines adherents, unlike teachers of literature-as-composition, generally recognize the folly of forcing students to conform to the conventions of a discourse community they have no desire to join.

Spellmeyer has also argued against the teaching of discipline-specific writing on more political grounds, stating that composition should not emphasize the specialized discourse of various academic specialties, but rather the shared discourse needed for productive citizenship in a democracy (*Common Ground* 15). Rather than encouraging students to assimilate the voices of academic "insiders," Spellmeyer argues, composition teachers should help students to find their own "authentic voices," so that students are "permitted a dialogue between the intellectual traditions of the school and the local knowledge of home and neighborhood" (*Common Ground* 38). Thus, we should

help students develop the “ability to resist the coercive power of authoritative language” (“A Common Ground” 268-69), rather than helping them to assume that power by adopting that language.

Spellmeyer voices legitimate concerns and presents substantial arguments. Nevertheless, his arguments do not negate the case for research-paper assignments, or even for a modest amount of exposure to specialized academic discourse and genre conventions, in first-year composition. In the first place, a composition teacher need not make an either/or choice between emphasizing personal voice and emphasizing academic discourse. Students ordinarily complete a number of writing assignments in first-year composition, some of which may emphasize the student’s personal experiences and “authentic voice,” others of which may emphasize academic research and a more detached voice. And as may be confirmed by a glance at pages 894 to 896 of Spellmeyer’s own essay in the December 1996 issue of *College English*, even a highly academic, research-oriented essay may include substantial portions of personal narrative and the less formal style in which such narrative is ordinarily presented. The decision to adopt certain conventions of a specialized academic discourse does not preclude the use of “authentic voice” — or perhaps more accurately, the use of certain conventions of a kind of discourse which readers traditionally have been more willing to describe as “authentic voice.” In fact, the field-research projects advocated by many writing-in-the-disciplines enthusiasts seem an ideal vehicle for the “dialogue between the intellectual traditions of the school and the local knowledge of home and neighborhood” (*Common Ground* 38) sought by Spellmeyer. In portraying discipline-specific writing instruction as the foe of “authentic voice,” Spellmeyer again comes close to the straw-man approach, portraying composition teachers who emphasize discipline-specific writing as cousins to those secondary school teachers who tell students “Never use ‘I’ in a school essay, especially a research paper.” In reality, the study of academic genre has encouraged much more flexible views of writing, the sort demonstrated by James Raymond’s and Gesa Kirsch’s recent articles in *College English* exploring the rhetorical effects of an author’s choice to use or not to use the authorial “I” in academic writing.

Finally, there remains Spellmeyer’s suggestion that we encourage students “to resist the coercive power of authoritative language.” In the first place, as demonstrated by the earlier example of my student’s paper about teenagers and the media, teaching composition students discipline-specific conventions can at times help those students adopt a questioning stance toward published studies, thus helping them resist the power of potentially coercive language. Moreover, students will have difficulty resisting something if they do not know that it exists or if, knowing that it exists, they cannot decipher it. If teachers deny students the opportunity to gain control over “authoritative language” on the basis that such denial is for the students’ own good, those teachers are exercising the very paternalism they so often criticize. As Elaine Maimon puts it, “Those who would keep students igno-

rant of the academic landscape in the name of helping them find their own rebellious voice do not understand much about guerilla warfare” (xi-xii).

In addition, as discussed earlier in this essay, because many “insiders” in academic discourse communities wield their “authoritative language” with little thought to the political implications of that language, one could argue that composition teachers are almost obligated to introduce their students to that language so that future “insiders” will use language more thoughtfully and others will read it more critically. As Bazerman notes,

Discourse studies of the disciplines, which aim to understand the dynamics of each field and the state of play into which each new participant enters, can help build the intellectual foundations for courses that enable students to enter into disciplines as empowered speakers rather than as conventional followers of accepted practice, running as hard as they can just to keep up appearances. Even more, discourse studies can provide an enlightened perspective through which students can view the professional and disciplinary fields with which they will have to deal as outsiders. (“From Cultural Criticism” 67)

Yet I would still argue that in first-year composition, exposure to such genres should be extremely limited, because of human nature and the students’ situations. As is implicit in the latter part of Bazerman’s quotation, most undergraduates will not eventually earn graduate degrees and become “insiders” in an academic discourse community. For that matter, almost half of all first-year composition students will never graduate from college, and even among those who will eventually graduate, most have little or no idea what their eventual major will be. And as Bazerman states in his e-mail to me, students must “find meaning and value in a discourse before they will see the point of much explicit teaching about the organization of the discourse or how to participate in it.” Thus, when Bazerman introduces certain conventions of relatively specialized academic research and writing in the later chapters of his composition textbook *The Informed Writer*, he does so in a way that suggests he is primarily concerned with helping students to read and critically consider research-based academic writing, and only secondarily concerned with helping them to produce such writing, and to conduct the research which precedes it, themselves. So even after largely rejecting others’ claims about the dangers inherent in teaching conventions of specialized academic genres, I believe that such teaching should be at most a minor portion of the research-based component of first-year composition, for one simple reason: most first-year students are not ready to understand fully, or to become interested in, such genres.

Actually, there is a second reason, equally simple: most composition teachers are not adequately prepared to teach such genre conventions. For whatever reasons, administrators nationwide have chosen to staff composition programs as inexpensively as possible, largely with graduate students new to

teaching or with part-time teachers hired on an adjunct basis. Many of these teachers do a wonderful job, far better than their institutions' lack of financial commitment deserves. But as Richard Larson points out, to teach students about the many genres of academic discourse requires a staggeringly broad range of knowledge and interests, and most administrators are unwilling to make the financial commitment necessary to assure the hiring of teachers who will always be equal to the task ("Three Recent Explorations" 344, 351).

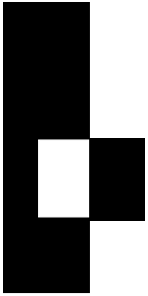
So where does all this leave us? For the most part, back at point two on MacDonald's continuum, although a few of us, like baseball players taking a big lead in hopes of stealing a base, keep edging toward point three through advocacy of field research, Swales's "moves," or other procedures from the disciplines. And on the whole, we should be satisfied with where we are. Even among writing-in-the-disciplines researchers who otherwise stress the desirability of knowledge of highly specialized rhetorical situations, there is a sense that conventions of "generalized academic writing" do exist and that mastering those conventions can help students prepare for writing in other disciplines. Nor must we view "generalized academic writing" only as a means to an end as the hierarchy of points on MacDonald's continuum implies, with the point-two writer longing to achieve point-four status the way a runner on second base longs to score. Producing good generalized academic writing is an impressive and highly desirable achievement in itself, blending the best of the shared public discourse of citizenship championed by Spellmeyer with the rudiments of specialized discourses analyzed by the writing-in-the-disciplines researchers. For composition teachers and students, as for ballplayers, one could do worse than to be on second.

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Learning to Link Artifact and Value: The Arguments of Student Designers

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Introduction¹

If design, as Simon (1981) claims, is what people do when they devise courses of action “aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (p. 129), and if preferences are inherently contentious — “the preferable,” Perelman (1982) writes, is one of two kinds of opinion about which people argue (p. 23) — then design is as much about *arguing* as it is about planning and building. It follows that learning to be a designer is, at least in part, learning how to argue in certain ways. Unfortunately, research and scholarship on design have paid insufficient attention to argument and how rhetoricians might intervene to improve it. In this paper, I examine the ways one group of student designers argued on behalf of their work for an actual client. I try to answer the following questions: What claims did the students make when presenting their work to others? What evidence did they offer? What values did they appeal to? Finally, were their arguments any good?

The analysis offered here participates in the more general project of exploring the shape of rhetorical practice in particular social and cognitive contexts. As formulated by Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey (1987), this project rests on two presuppositions: first, that argument is more unified than the division of academic fields implies; second, that it is more diverse than notions of unitary method or reason allow (pp. 4-5). A rhetoric of design, then, is one interested in the particular but recognizable arguments of design practice. My analysis diverges from Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey’s project, however, in two ways. First, the design/rhetoric relationship is here primarily an educational problem (and not, say, an epistemological one). That is, I am looking at the social and discursive activities of expert practice from the point of view of students *learning* that practice. Second, like Leff (1987), I am as concerned with what this research tells us about *rhetoric* as with what it tells us about a special field of knowledge or practice.

By “design,” I mean here the work of architects, engineers, urban planners, and others who plan and build the material world. By “rhetoric,” I mean the arts of planned, social discourse. In examining the relationship between these two, I begin with the following observation: Design appears to involve a

devaluation of rhetoric — a devaluation, that is, of practical deliberation, social identification, and discursive elaboration. This devaluation, it should be noted, is different from the related suppression of rhetoric in science because the ends of design (unlike those of science) are always conditioned by an external audience. As Aristotle noted about architecture, the user of an artifact is a better judge of it than its creator (*Politics*, 3.11 1282a21-22). Designers — by the very nature of what they do — plan and build things *for others*; they are guided by social purpose in a way that scientists are not. A devaluation of rhetoric in design, therefore, would be especially troubling.

How does this devaluation of rhetoric present itself? First, the *process* of design is seen to be inhospitable to rhetoric. Coyne & Snodgrass (1991) have shown how design is typically construed as either a romantic (and therefore mysterious) or technical (and therefore pre-determined) enterprise. Either way, the production of the artificial world, as Buchanan (1989) has argued, is closed to deliberation. But even when the process is seen to involve contingent choice-making, it turns out to be a kind of deliberation unlike that posited in most rhetorical models. Rather than a canvassing of multiple, contemporaneously-available alternatives, as in political reasoning, design often involves the material instantiation and development of a single idea. Rowe (1987), for example, has discussed the “dominant influence” exerted by initial design ideas on the process of idea generation (p. 36); and Lawson (1980) has summarized research on the way designers latch onto ideas early in a design project (p. 34). Goel & Pirolli (1992) have claimed that ideas in design are nurtured and incrementally developed until a final solution is reached, rather than discarded and replaced with new ideas (pp. 406, 420-1); they claim that this is “one of the most robust findings” in the literature on design (p. 420). In sum, the process of design appears to be at odds with most models of rhetorical deliberation.

Second, a devaluation of rhetoric is evident in prominent conceptions of the “built world.” In such accounts, the ideal artifact is autonomous and self-explanatory; the use of language to describe or explain the object is, then, an admission of that object’s failure. In “affordance” theories (e.g., Gibson, 1977), for example, an artifact wears its purpose on its sleeve (thus, a well-designed saw should indicate, by its very form, where it is to be held and how it works — it should *afford* the activity of sawing). Norman’s (1988) “principle of visibility” also associates language with design failure. A door that requires the word “push” or “pull” on its surface is, by this principle, a poorly-designed door. In such approaches, the interface between artifact and use is transparent, and the opening for rhetoric is much reduced. (For helpful discussions of the “self-explanatory artifact,” see Mitchell, 1989; Paradis, 1991; and Suchman, 1987).

Third, a devaluation of rhetoric can be seen in the ways designers characterize their knowledge and skill vis à vis non-designers. If designers are *professionals*, requiring “uncommon” knowledge, then design involves the same tendencies for social demarcation present in other professions (see, e.g., Bledstein, 1976; Schön, 1983). Professionalization, in other words, implies that

the designer is a “knowing” solver of problems; and the client, an “unknowing” bearer of problems. Rhetoric as an art of social identification is irrelevant in such a situation; the only social attitudes needed are distance (on the part of the designer) and deference (on the part of the client). (For anti-social tendencies in design practice and education, see Cuff, 1985; 1989; and 1991.)

We might compare, then, two very different views of design. In one, rhetoric occupies an important role, assisting in discovering and sharing “the preferable” in any particular situation. In the other, rhetoric occupies, at most, a minor role. In this paper, I hope to show that the practice of design, at least as exemplified by the work of one group of advanced student designers, involves significant rhetorical maneuvering. But I also hope to show that these designers handled the rhetorical challenges of their project in a somewhat unsophisticated way and thus might have profited from more explicit attention to the argumentative nature of their work.

Narrative and Methods

In late 1991, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Pittsburgh approached the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Design Department for help with its printed communications. The JCC is a hundred-year-old religious, cultural, and recreational organization located in an urban neighborhood of Pittsburgh. At the time of the project, it was serving more than 14,000 local members through a variety of programs: assistance for recent Jewish immigrants; daily lunches for senior citizens; preschool and after-school programs for children; a full-service fitness club, swimming pool, and gymnasium; religious activities; theater productions; trips and tours, etc. In support of these programs, the JCC’s three-member Communications Staff was producing more than 20 different publications on a regular basis, including a 50-page seasonal *Program Guide*; an annual report; various quarterly, monthly, and weekly newsletters; and numerous occasional publications, such as flyers and postcards, publicizing programs and events. There were few explicit standards guiding production of these materials; and, as the Director of Communications later explained it, the JCC wanted to upgrade its publications, to make them more “professional-looking” and “user-friendly.”

The CMU Design Department, meanwhile, was looking for “real-world” design projects for its students. CMU is a technologically-oriented, private, urban university in the eastern United States. Its Design Department includes two undergraduate majors — Industrial Design and Graphic Design — leading to the Bachelor of Fine Arts. The Department offered the world’s first design degree in the 1930s and has been a leader in design education ever since. Students in Graphic Design take courses in psychology, Art History, drawing, two- and three-dimensional design fundamentals, photography, design computing, prototype methods, typography, and production. Students also take numerous studio courses. The capstone studio course — the Graphic Design Degree Project — is taken during the Spring semester of the student’s senior

year. The JCC project was one of several Graphic Design Degree Projects offered in the Spring of 1992.

The project lasted approximately four months, from mid-January to the first week in May. Each student in the project developed and produced a set of graphic “standards” for JCC publications. In the project brief written by their design professor, these standards were defined as “concepts” which would unify the JCC’s graphic communication materials; they would include recommendations about typography, color, visual imagery, formats, grids, paper, production methods, and information structure. Also included in the brief was an outline of the stages the students would go through during the project (“visual audit,” “concept phase,” “design development,” “final design comprehensives,” and “documentation”) and a timeline listing four scheduled meetings between the designers and the client during the course of the semester. Although occurring in an educational context, this project involved, then, a real task for a real client who expected artifacts that would actually be used.

Seven students participated in the project. Six were senior graphic design majors; the non-designer, a Master’s student in professional writing, dropped out of the project after two weeks. Of the remaining students, five were female, and one was male, all in their early 20s. There were two professors working on the project, both male. The principal one was an adjunct professor of design at CMU and a practicing professional designer in Pittsburgh. The other was a professor of rhetoric in CMU’s English Department. His participation in the course marked the first attempt by the English Department to offer a special course in writing and rhetoric for design students. Project participants from the JCC included the Director of Communications, two staff assistants, a program director (all female), and the JCC’s executive vice president (male).

The JCC project was complex in many ways. First, the problem confronting the students was a considerable one: the organization itself was large (in addition to 14,000 members, there were more than 150 staff members, not including officers, board members, and volunteers); it produced a large number of publications, many of which were quite complicated (the *Program Guide*, for example); and each needed, at least from the students’ point of view, a great deal of work. Second, the project involved many people: fourteen were directly involved in one way or another. Third, the project was to be completed in four months, a short amount of time given the size of the task and the lack of resources for solving it.

Fourth, the project had, from the beginning, a palpable feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability about it. As with perhaps all design problems, there was no obvious solution to the JCC’s problem, no algorithm, formula, or model that would automatically solve it. There wasn’t even a consensus about what the problem *was*. The JCC presented the students with a vague representation of their objectives and expectations, and the student’s design professor exacerbated this problem by adding additional, and equally vague, objectives and expectations. The result was that the students were often unsure about what they were supposed to do and how they were supposed to do it. It may

be more accurate, then, to categorize the JCC's "problem" as what Dewey (1938) called "an indeterminate situation": an uncertain, unsettled, doubtful, ambiguous, and confused *mess* (cf. Buchanan, 1992).

Finally, the project was complex because it involved students who were inexperienced in working with a "real" client and a client which, as a non-profit community organization, was perhaps less than ideal for cutting-edge designers from a high-tech university. Working on both a "real-world" and an educational project, the students often found themselves with competing goals. They were as interested in producing attractive pieces for their job portfolios as they were in pleasing the JCC. As for the client, it claimed to want a more professional and "user-friendly" look; but, in the end, it lacked the money, technology, and institutional support for radical change. Because of this, relations between the designers and client were often strained; as early as the third week of the project, each group was complaining (to the researcher) about the other. At the end, the students described the JCC as "not serious" about re-designing its publications, and the client described the students' recommendations as "arbitrary." Despite this, the students finished the project on time, and all of them handed over to the JCC comprehensive manuals laying out in both words and pictures a new "look" for the JCC's printed communications. Unfortunately, the JCC was not, in general, pleased with what it got; most of the designs were deemed inappropriate or unsatisfactory for one reason or another, although one part of one student's system — a graphic element based on an architectural feature of the JCC's main building — was adopted in the months following the project.

In this paper, I analyze the students' formal arguments to the JCC on behalf of their designs.² Data come from transcripts of the students' formal oral presentations (20 separate speeches from 7 different speakers on 4 different occasions: January 29, February 12, March 18, and April 27) and their final written manuals (6 books documenting, in both words and images, the designers' different systems, each about 30 pages long and delivered to the client on May 4).

A Typology of Arguments

The students in the JCC project sought, in their speeches and texts, to connect the objects they built with the values, preferences, and goals of their client. They appeared to know that, in public representations of their work, they needed to advance reasons for their proposals; that these reasons needed to be aligned with the "good" and the "useful"; and that such alignments needed to be *addressed* to a particular audience in a particular situation. In other words, rather than simply forcing decisions on the client, or trusting that the value of their work would be self-evident, the students consciously attempted — through discourse — to make their choices seem *reasonable* to the JCC.

As an example of such an attempt, let's look at an oral presentation given on March 18, approximately two-thirds of the way through the project. Here, one of the students describes a graphic element she has developed for use in JCC publications.

(1) [26.98-112] [Mar 18]³

D4: This *Program Guide* that I've been working on, the size is consistent um with D3's, and um the whole structure and organization, classes, activities, services, is the same. um, I was working on trying to pull out the days, times, and dates a little bit more, so, in a different manner, and um going through here, the audiences are broken down into the colors, um you may notice that this sort of rule and square is becoming a graphic element, that it calls to the attention maybe when you're at this general information section or (). um ((laughs)) I've used this um element to to () in the *Program Guide* that is consistent, that's gonna bring to your attention of where the, um what time it's being taken place, what day it's taking place, as well as using color to highlight the event, um being the two important charact- or figures there, um overall, the *Program Guide* um is in that sense I'm using it for organization um and that rule is then consistent throughout, so that wherever you go, you always know where to look for the day, time, or um place, et cetera.

D4 is doing many things here. She is reporting her progress since the last meeting, connecting her work with that of the other designers, verbally indexing objects on display, defining key terms, and rationalizing her decisions. She is using language, in other words, to control the way her work gets "hooked up" with the actions, knowledge, and values of her various "publics." When, for example, she says,

I'm using it for organization

she is presenting her work to others by advancing reasons in support of it. The rule and square, she says, is an object designed for a certain end, i.e., "for organization." She explicitly constructs the artifact she has built, in other words, as tied to audience-relative goals, purposes, functions, and "goods." This is not *just* a thing; it is a tool which accomplishes desired ends for other people. In fact, at various points during this speech, D4 makes explicit the connection between her rule and square and the JCC's goals: the device works to "pull out" days and times; it "calls to your attention" where you are in the publication; it's used "for organization"; with it, the reader "always know[s] where" to find needed information. The artifact is thus made to appear — or at least D4 hopes it will appear — reasonable, intelligent, useful, and valuable. It is good, in other words, because it is associated with the JCC's imputed preference for easily-navigated documents.

In fact, much of the students' work in this project can be seen as an attempt to connect their material creations with the abstract (and necessarily discursive) values of their client. The connection between form and purpose is a common refrain in design theory: Perkins (1986), for example, defines design as the "human endeavor of shaping objects to purposes," and Louis Sullivan's maxim "form follows function" is a commonplace among designers. Rarely, however, is the association between material artifact and human purpose seen to be a *discursive* phenomenon — something constituted through *language*. And yet the association of particular material objects with various "god terms" (Weaver, 1953) ("organization," "unity," "consistency," "distinction," "reader-friendliness," "legibility," and the like) may well be the central social fact of design. As with the technical manuals analyzed by Paradis (1991), design discourse "infuses human purpose into mechanical devices or their equivalents, thus aligning the neutral products of technology with the value-laden ends of society" (p. 258). Design, in other words, is about discursively connecting the material world with "desirability characteristics."⁴

The association of a speaker's or writer's ideas (or products) with the commonly-held assumptions of his or her audience — between, that is, unique and situated beliefs (or artifacts) and relatively stable social values — has long been a central concern of rhetorical theory. Aristotle's "common topics," writes Crowley (1994), included not only questions of *conjecture* (whether a thing has or has not occurred, will or will not occur) and *possibility* (what is or is not possible), but also *value* (whether a thing is greater or smaller than another thing). More recently, Wallace (1963), has claimed that ethical and moral values (at one point described as "popular and probable value axioms" [p. 249] and divided into the desirable, the obligatory, and the admirable or praiseworthy) are the very substance of rhetorical discourse (or "civil decision making"). The values appealed to in the deliberative rhetoric of design are, broadly speaking, the *good* and the *useful*, what (it is thought) a particular audience in a particular situation will find worthy and/or expedient.⁵ Design arguments can be seen, then, as attempts to help a client answer the question "What ought I to do?" And a good designer is someone who can both build good (i.e., worthy, useful) things *and* justify them by appealing to audience-relative values, preferences, and desires.

In the JCC project, the students discursively connected artifact and value in four ways, moves which I have labeled *explaining*, *predicting*, *justifying*, and *warranting*. This typology was developed inductively: in reading the transcripts of the students' speeches and manuals, I apprehended salient patterns and themes therein, gradually built up categories of moves, and refined those categories through additional readings. In this, my analytic method resembled that described by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their discussion of the development of "grounded theory." Although derived from the JCC data, the typology is presented here at a level abstract enough to be — in principle — generalizable to other design situations. Whether it is in fact transferable remains to be seen; but the following discussion attempts to relate the argu-

ments used by these particular students to features of design practice that are, I believe, cross-situational.

Explaining

In explaining, the students connected their *actions* to rational purposes or generally accepted values. Explanations answered the questions: why was this action taken? Why was this artifact designed this way? They advanced the value of design artifacts by appealing to the purposeful actions that produced them. Such moves were thus less concerned with the goodness or usefulness of end results than with the goodness or usefulness of the processes which led up to them. Of course, to explain *why* something was done often provides only a weak defense of the worthiness or utility of that thing. To say that Medicare was designed to serve the medical needs of the elderly tells us little about whether Medicare is a *good* way — let alone the best way — to achieve that goal. It is for this reason that some theorists have rigidly differentiated argument and explanation.⁶ In design, however, it would seem that associating one's work with the purpose, thought, or intelligence behind it *is* a good reason to value that work, however dangerous might be the apparent collapse of “cause” and “reason.” One result of this kind of logic is that explaining moves turn out to be inescapably *ethical*, the purpose, thought, or intelligence behind a design being primarily a characteristic of the person who created it. When we tell our lover, “I did X because I love you,” we are not so much making an argument about the goodness or usefulness of X as making a statement about the goodness or usefulness of the motive *behind* X, the “thought” that went into it.

The key discursive features of explanation are three: the design artifact itself, the action which produced that artifact, and the purpose or value attributed to and rationalizing the action. The hypothetical example below includes all three features, the artifact underlined, the action in italics, and the purpose or value in bold.

For typography, *we decided to go with Helvetica* **to conserve space.**

Or, expressed more abstractly:

via rational action
Artifact ——— 1 ——— **Value**

We have, then, 1) a design artifact or decision (“For typography . . . Helvetica”); 2) a design action (“decided to go with,” here connected to a particular human agent, “we”); and 3) a design purpose or value, often comprised of two parts, a verb which provides linguistic means for the material object to “afford” an abstract social value and the socially-acceptable value itself: “to conserve

space,” a *desideratum* assumed by this designer to carry weight with this client.

Examples of explanation moves from the transcripts appear below.

(2) [D3, manual, 13]

This *Guide* has been designed to have a friendly tone (for example, as expressed by color and type size), to read easily and to be easily referenced by different audiences.

(3) [38.236-238] [Apr 27]

D1: We based our system pretty much I guess on the graphics, the bold graphics to call out attention and fun and dynamics of the Jewish Community Center.

(4) [D4, manual, 27]

A system of paper has been developed to enhance the integrity of the graphic standards system as well as emphasizing the audience breakdown.

(5) [38.49-51] [Apr 27]

D3: I use this to not only link one document but then to use something to link your whole system.

(6) [D2, manual, 4]

The audience icons were chosen to capture the spirit of each age group, giving each audience a part of the JCC to identify with.

Sometimes the explanation is embedded in a narrative of design progress:

(7) [9.225-230] [Feb 12]

D4: We also worked with different type families, um, Helvetica being one that you have that, you have a lot of, it allows for a lot of flexibility, but we also worked with Times Roman, which is a, a serif typeface. Helvetica is a sans-serif typeface. just to get a little more variety and to see what you could do with it.

Other times, personal agency is obscured, and the explanation becomes “internal” to the object itself:

(8) [26.432] [Mar 18]

D5: The rules are used to highlight information.

(9) [D5, manual, 23]

The *Preschool Press* uses a version of the squiggle on the cover but in drawn childlike form to give the publication a more fun and creative look overall.

The specific values appealed to in these explanations (“to have a friendly tone,” “to call out attention and fun and dynamics of the JCC,” “to enhance the

integrity of the graphic standards system,” “to highlight information,” etc.) provide an indication of what these designers believed persuasive for this client in this situation and how they believed their objects “afforded” those values (by “calling out,” by “having,” by “enhancing,” by “giving”).

To sum up, then, in explaining, the designers presented their actions as rational, purposeful, and intelligent. The object itself was assumed to be stable, even non-controversial; it was the action *behind* the object that was argued for. The design itself was a *fait accompli*, motivated by the goal-directed reasoning of the designer. The focus, then, was the designer him- or herself, a reasonable agent for whom the client’s purposes were foremost.

Predicting

In explaining, the designers connected their past actions to socially-relevant purposes; in predicting, they connected their work to future consequences or effects. Predictions answered the questions: what happens if this design is used, chosen or accepted? How will actual users benefit? What will be the consequences for the client? How will this change people’s lives? Predictions, that is, foregrounded the dominant temporal “order” of design, from present to future. With such a move, the JCC designers didn’t simply associate their work with a socially acceptable purpose or value; they made that connection a temporal one, the present artifact *producing* future benefits and values.⁷

For this reason, predictions may have been the boldest assertions these designers made. When I make a prediction about the future consequences or benefits my design will have, I open myself up to the verification or falsification of that claim. If those benefits do not accrue, my design will be a failure. The riskiness of such claims did not, however, seem to frighten these designers, who consistently sought to make the material world shimmer with future consequences. To understand such arguments, we probably need to know more about what Toulmin (1958) called “type-shifts,” the seemingly illogical bridges between data and claim necessary for non-formal arguments to work. Many of Toulmin’s examples of this phenomenon were, in fact, predictions (e.g., astronomers predict future planetary movements by appealing to past and present positions).

In predictions, the rationality of a design inheres in its imputed consequences. The key discursive features of such argument are 1) the object, artifact, or decision itself; 2) a verb of futurity or projection; and 3) the effect, consequence, or benefit attributed. The prototype would be something like this:

The three-column grid will make the Program Guide easier to read.

Or, expressed more abstractly:

via future consequence

Artifact ———— | ———— **Value**

Unlike arguments of explanation, focused exclusively on the designer him- or herself and his or her thinking, in predicting we begin to hear about actual users. When a designer says, “this guide has been designed to have a friendly tone,” the value inheres in the object itself, built by the designer for that purpose. But when she says “The three column grid will make the *Program Guide* easier to read,” ease of reading is something that happens *to somebody*.

Some examples from the transcripts follow. First are arguments of prediction:

(10) [2.125-130] [Jan 29]

D1: They’ll give you the ability to market your programs more efficiently and successfully to a wide audience . . . With a more organized system of communication, you’ll cut down on the overload of materials you currently send out.

(11) [26.12-14] [Mar 18]

D3: It’s a five column grid system, and that’s just a, when you have a five-column grid, it’ll keep the pages in an organized fashion, um, and yet there’s still variety.

(12) [D5, manual, 7]

Color will help lead the reader through the complexity of the different divisions within the different publications, especially the *Program Guide*, which is a publication for all audiences.

Next come arguments of consequence, where certain desirable qualities are seen to follow from various designs:

(13) [D3, manual, 13]

The new look of the *Program Guide* creates an image of permanence and consistency.

(14) [D2, manual, n.p.]

These black and white elements make the flyer visually exciting and fun to read.

(15) [26.69-71] [Mar 18]

D3: And the identity is also a constant . . . You, um, you always know that, people always know what it is they’re getting and where it’s coming from, know almost immediately.

Finally, we have arguments of ability or affordance:

(16) [26.415-417] [Mar 18]

D5: The colors what they, what they do is they allow the reader to quickly index what, where they are in, in the *Program Guide*.

(17) [26.242-246] [Mar 18]

D1: And then when you open it up, we have, um, tabs with the different audiences represented, so that, uh, you can find what you're, you know, the parents can find what they're, they're looking for for their children, but you can also, it also opens up the user to all the other things that are offered.

We can see how, with predictions, objects are transformed (either through verbs like “create,” or through the future tense: “will unify,” “will keep”) and what those transformations produce, that is, the socially relevant values associated with these artifacts: permanence and consistency, unification and differentiation, organization and variety. Once again, designers are appealing to the good and useful (as situated values) in order to elicit or increase adherence to their work.

To sum up, then, arguments of prediction associated a present material artifact or decision with a desired consequence or benefit. Where explanations were predominantly past-oriented, ethical, and empirically ambiguous; predictions were future-oriented, user-centered, and empirically determinate.

Justifying

In justifying, the designers connected the built world itself with socially-acceptable values or goods. Where in explaining, they associated their work with reasonable past actions; and in predicting, with desired future consequences; in justifying, they appealed to “goods” intrinsic to the objects themselves. As such, justifications answered the questions: why is this a good thing? What valuable qualities are associated with it? Justifications were thus a powerful kind of argument, allowing the designers to *identify* (cf. Burke, 1969) their material work with the established preferences of their audience. Unfortunately, justifications were almost exclusively “positive,” providing little or no access to comparison or criticism. If I press you to buy a new pair of sunglasses because they are “attractive,” I may be making a powerful argument that will increase your adherence to those glasses; but unless my arguments acknowledge affordability and sun protection, or the possible disinterest on your part in looking attractive, or my previously-established bad taste, they may never convince you. The justificatory argument can thus be a powerful one (especially if the values appealed to are carefully chosen). But if the values appealed to are vague, if they are not carefully chosen, or if there are other considerations involved, justifications may have limited effect.⁸

As for their actual discursive structure, justifications tend to work in a less complex way than either explanations or predictions. Where explanations associate artifact with purpose *via* rational action; and where predictions associate object with desired effect *via* a verb of transformation; justifications connect object or decision directly to a value-term. We might take as prototype the following justification:

The good thing about this kind of binding is that **it lays flat**.

Or, to put it more abstractly:

via equivalance
Artifact ———— | ———— **Value**

The object and value are joined here by the copula *is*, suggesting a simple equation or identity between object and value. This very stripping down of the argument may provide a clue both to justification's seductive power and its critical limitations. The argument doesn't work by making one's *actions* reasonable or by claiming empirically-verifiable *consequences*; rather the object itself is just *good*.

Examples from the transcripts should illustrate what I mean here:

(18) [D1, manual, 8]

Blue is suggestive of childhood: carefree and active.

(19) [9.243-244] [Feb 12]

D5: New Century Schoolbook is a nice, kind of light, elegant serif.

(20) [D2, manual, 4]

The icon system is not only fun and inviting, but also solves communication problems.

(21) [D2, manual, 10]

The system is built upon the 8.5 inch standard width for paper, which is a comfortable, user-friendly size.

(22) [D6, manual, 6]

Garamond is a serif typeface that has a warm, inviting feel to it.

Justifications sometimes employed more "objective" reasons:

(23) [26.25-27] [Mar 18]

D3: We've kind of set a foundation color of the Jewish Community Center as blue, the building is mostly blue, the Israeli flag is blue and white, so it is kind of the color um foundation.

(24) [D2, manual, 4]

The audience icons are symbols of trees in different stages of growth. They represent the growth of people. The tree also references the Tree of Life in Judaism.

Often the justification was more like a simple evaluation:

(25) [9.325] [Feb 12]

D4: This is what we think works best for the logo.

(26) [26.83] [Mar 18]

D3: The *Front and Center* four-column grid seems to be working.

To sum up, then, justifications worked by associating an object with a term of value or goodness. The association was effected not through a mediating operation (as indicated by a verb of past or future action) but by transferring the value or good directly to the object through a linking verb like “be” or “seems.” Justifications were the most value-laden of design arguments in this project and, hence, the most emotionally powerful. From a logical point of view, however, we might ask, how can an inert, material object ever really *be* “carefree,” “elegant,” “fun and exciting”?

Warranting

In warranting, the designers connected their work to relevant *knowledge*, either of the problem-situation or of a generative design principle (that is, a social or technical inference-license).⁹ As such, warrants answered the questions: by what reason are you authorized to do this? What principle supports your decision? We offer a warrant whenever we appeal to a law, rule, principle, or logical norm to support our claims or to sanction our directives and proposals: “I chose this car because I needed a large trunk, and it had the largest trunk on the market.” Warrants were the most rule-like arguments used in this project, the most portable, and the most “scientific.” With warrants, the designers did more than make their own actions seem reasonable, predict future benefits, or associate the things they built with various god-terms; they gave their objects an *edifying* reason, connecting them to social “goods” in a way that could be rationally adjudicated, compared, explained, criticized, even taught. In justifying, we say, “those sunglasses are attractive”; but in warranting, “those sunglasses are attractive because they accentuate your cheekbones.”

Although relatively rare in this project, warrants were the strongest arguments encountered in this analysis. But even they failed on some accounts. In the sunglasses argument above, we may still have to worry about unconsidered values (cost, for example, or sun protection) and empirical proof of the connection asserted. But if our primary value is attractiveness, the warranted argument serves not only as a mark of preference but provides us with a portable rule for use in future situations: “attractive” sunglasses may have something to do with the accentuation of cheekbones.

How did warrants manifest themselves discursively? Typically, the students proposed a course of action and then provided a generalizable principle, rule, or reason that sanctioned or guaranteed that proposal. Warrants differed from explanations because the focus was not on the action of the designer him- or herself; they differed from predictions because they provided a reason rather than an empirically verifiable projection; and they differed from justifications because the reason was offered on behalf of a decision or commitment, not the object itself.

*It's important to leave some white space so **the page isn't so busy**.*

Or more abstractly:

via principle or rule
Artifact ————|————— **Value**

Here, then, we have not a material object connected to a social value but an abstract directive associated with a rational criterion. The result is a portable principle that can be used in future contexts. The reason is introduced by “so,” in the same way that explaining moves typically include the purposive “to.”

Below are some examples of warranting moves from the transcripts:

(27) [D3, manual, 7]

Because the quality of the paper effects the reader’s perception of the document, this paper has been recommended for the letterhead: Sundance Linen, 70# text, bright white.

(28) [9.235-237] [Feb 12]

D4: For senior adults, readability’s sake, twelve point, you can’t go smaller than that because of readability.

(29) [9.240-243] [Feb 12]

D5: We went with Helvetica Narrow [?] because in the *Program Guide*, you have a lot of copy, and Helvetica Narrow works very well when you have a lot of copy in conserving space.

(30) [38.245-246] [Apr 27]

D2: We lean a little bit more towards photographs, because it brings a more personable touch to the audiences.

(31) [D5, manual, 16]

Certain audiences need to receive the information by day rather than classes, thus the breakdown of information into weeks.

(32) [D4, manual, 28]

Bright, flashy paper can often be a turn off to readers, and for this reason, lighter, warmer papers were chosen to appeal to the audiences.

These arguments, unlike others we’ve seen, can provide designers and clients alike with a decision rule useful on other occasions. It is for this reason that I have referred to warrants as more “edifying” than explanations, predictions, or justifications. We learn from these examples that: papers should be chosen with an eye to the reader’s perception of the document; overcrowded pages inhibit readability; seniors need typography of at least 12 pts., etc. These are powerful reasons (I’m unconcerned here with whether they are correct) that provide good evidence for design artifacts and can also *teach* non-designers about good design.

Note that in warrants, the reason often precedes the announcement of the design itself:

(33) [D3, manual, 13]

The *Program Guide* is a key link between the Center and the people it serves. It is essential that this publication be easy to read, that the different audiences can access the information they desire with ease. The user must be able to sign up for membership or register for classes without frustration. This new *Program Guide* has been designed specifically to meet all of these needs.

This represents a move away from the *post hoc* arguments encountered in explaining, predicting, and justifying, where the artifact was presented or announced and only *then* connected to some socially acceptable value or purpose.

Design warrants were often used, however, in a way that provided argumentative support for a general design topic but not the specific, material decision itself. That is, a warrant was often a cogent argument for the *use* of a particular design device (i.e., color for highlighting) but not for the specific decision made (blue). We may be persuaded that “quality of paper effects the reader’s perception of the document,” as above, but still be unconvinced about the merits of the particular paper chosen, Sundance #70. To support *that* decision would require an altogether different and subsequent step, a step not provided here and which appears to have been generally neglected by these designers.

To sum up, warrants were the most “rational” arguments offered by these students. The artifact was constituted not through its association with a purposeful past action, empirically-verifiable consequence, or intrinsic value; rather, the design was good because it conformed to a known principle or rule.

Other

The four moves discussed above were, I believe, the main *argumentative* means by which these designers positioned their work for the JCC. There were other ways that they used language, of course: they criticized the client’s current designs; they reported progress; they made unsupported assertions; they specified decisions; they told stories; they reported research findings. Such uses of language were not, however, *argumentative* in the way I am using that term here.

Evaluating Design Arguments

The picture of design discourse presented so far has been one of reasoned productivity. In the excerpt below from her final manual, for example, D5 advances what appears to be a reasonable argument about her typographic choices:

(34) [D5, manual, 2]

The typography needs to be a consistent representation of The Jewish Community Center. The type is what conveys information to the public so it needs to be able to be read easily. Consistency of use of the correct typefaces will allow the reader to access the information quickly. With this in mind, two typefaces were chosen.

The Helvetica family is used for large publications with a lot of information and text to be read. Helvetica Light allows the usage of small print, allowing more copy to be read with ease. Helvetica Oblique differentiates information within text that needs to be pointed out, without interrupting the flow of text. Helvetica Bold is used mainly for titles of text.

The second typeface is Garamond. This type was chosen for its readability and elegance. Garamond can be used for text or title. Garamond Italic has a flowing quality that works well for titles that need a fancy look. Garamond Semibold is good for emphasis of titles in publications.

D5 doesn't just announce or dictate typeface recommendations; she explicitly associates her choices with the JCC's presumed interest in readable and elegant typography. She claims, among other things, that Helvetica Light is *good* (purposeful, effective, desirable) because it allows large amounts of copy to be put legibly in a small space. And Garamond is *good* because it is readable and elegant.

But there's a problem here. Although we have what appear to be plausible solution candidates for the design problem at hand, and although those candidates are associated with a relevant social purpose, the connection between means and end here is quite porous. There is no guarantee that *other* means couldn't *also* be associated with those ends, couldn't in fact, be *superior* to the means proposed. Why, a critical reader might ask, *two* typefaces? Why not one? or three? Why exactly does the JCC need consistent representation, and how does typography provide it? Why is ease and quickness of reading a desired goal for JCC publications, and how does consistent typography lead to such things? Do we know for sure that typography actually produces these effects? Finally, are there other (perhaps easier or cheaper) means of effecting the same ends? In other words, D5 has not adequately considered for her client, through shared discourse, *alternative* solutions to the problem, tested those alternatives against explicit criteria, and proposed for use the best one(s).

D5's argument, then, is missing important considerations. First, she offers for comparison no "counter-designs," i.e., no alternatives to Helvetica and Garamond. Second, she provides no explanation for how the values she promotes are achieved by the choices she has made (e.g., how "elegance" is

effected by Garamond) or how those values might have positive consequences for the client. Third, she fails to consider “counter-values” or side-effects of the stated values; that is, she never publicly *interrogates* the values, purposes, and ends on which she bases this argument, such as the value of packing large amounts of text into a small space or the desirability of having a typeface with a “flowing quality.” Fourth, she provides no empirical evidence for the connection between form and value, i.e., no data suggesting that readers actually value the “flowing quality” of Garamond or that it even has such a quality in the first place.¹⁰ We are not provided, in other words, with arguments of

- comparison;
- explication;
- interrogation; or
- verification.¹¹

The relevance of these considerations will vary with the rhetorical situation. Some decisions will no doubt carry a heavier burden of proof than others; because Helvetica is a standard typeface on most word processors, it may require less support than, say, Garamond. But in general, the arguments used by the students in this project were notable for their neglect of the critical considerations laid out above. Their rhetorical moves were almost entirely *positive*. They proceeded by proposing some material reality, often with a persuasively concrete visual accompaniment, and then associating that reality with an abstract social value or purpose. This kind of argument may be more rational and responsive than the kind advanced in, say, the “fine” arts; but it still leaves much to be desired from a critical point of view.¹² We can say positive things about Helvetica and Garamond; but how, without comparison, without a clearer explanation of how and why certain material things produce certain values, without assurances of prior consensus about values and their prioritization, without a shared narrative of deliberation and choice, without empirical verification of the connection between artifact and value, can we be persuaded that these are the best typefaces to use?

How is it, then, that the students’ work moved forward at all? Why would a client ever pay for a design if the arguments supporting it were so thin? Did these students have ways, that is, to compensate for the logical chasms in their reasoning? In the following paragraphs, I would like to speculate about features of design practice that may have persuasive force despite the limitations of the discourse designers use. In this effort, I am proceeding along lines drawn by Fahnestock & Secor (1991) who, having identified problems in the argumentative practices of literary critics, try to understand how those practices might still be persuasive: “[T]hrough literary arguments may seem flawed when viewed from a distance and by a field-independent standard, they can still be compelling to the audiences for whom they were intended” (p. 84).

Materiality. No amount of argument will persuade a client if the design is never actually built. At some point in every project, the artifact itself — as a material, physical, concrete thing — takes on part of the burden of proof. The materiality of the design, in other words, becomes one proof of its goodness. Regardless of what it actually *looks* like or can *do*, a design that has a material status apart from the words used to describe it has already achieved a certain persuasiveness. Compared to a verbal argument, an object actually built has resilience, intractability, obstinance, and stability; it is potentially a cause of other things and not “merely” an effect of language. Further, the artifact is a shared perceptual accomplishment, this fact taking over some of the work that words would normally have to do to socially *establish* it. The object can even dominate and silence words; its salience, that is, can make some kinds of verbal exploration and inquiry inappropriate or inaccessible. Finally, the material artifact can be tested and verified in a way that verbal proposals cannot; we can, for example, take the artifact and subject it to use. In sum, we can say about design what might be said about cooking: an imperfect but edible pudding is preferable to one eloquently depicted but physically unavailable.

Evolution. But it's not just that the object is materially-configured, it's that this presence represents an investment of time, talent, expenditure, and risk, the very effort required for its making being one proof in its behalf. The object *qua* object, in other words, may acquire persuasive power as it becomes evident that it is the result of a process that a client may not have the time, money, or patience to duplicate. Govier (1987), for example, claims that the revision of a design is a “tacit argument” against the original product and for the revision (p. 240). It would appear, then, that, while designers may not canvas alternatives according to a traditional “adjudication” model (see Black, 1978), in which multiple solution candidates are contemporaneously available for comparison, they do appear to judge the objects they build vis à vis previous incarnations of those objects. That is, the argument works not by comparing X with alternatives Y and Z, but by comparing X today with the way X looked yesterday. Since the artifact is *better* by that criterion, the designer infers that it is *good* by other criteria as well.

We might say, then, that the central argument for an artifact is implicit in the agent-specific processes that produced it. Why don't designers more systematically consider alternative designs? Because they find it difficult to imagine that what *they* find valuable might not actually be so. Humans, Aristotle wrote, tend to prefer their own opinions, habits, and products over other opinions, habits, and products: “The producer is fond of the product, because he loves his own being. And this is natural, since what he is potentially is what the product indicates in actualization” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.7 1168-a7-9; qtd. in Garver, 1994, p. 59). It may be more “critical,” “rational,” and “scientific” to produce large numbers of artifacts and only then choose which one best satisfies relevant criteria, but this does not appear to be a common way to design things. What designers produce they *already* value; if they didn't value it, they wouldn't have produced it. This doesn't mean that designers

don't change their minds, but it does mean that they may fail to differentiate what they do and build from what they value and prefer. For Mitcham (1979), this "break down" of "rational" control in design is a characteristic feature of the productive arts. Because of their involvement with the inherent particularity of the material world, the arts of technology make only limited use of *logos*. What, then, do they use?

[T]here is at the heart of technical activity if not of *techne* itself an irreducible, nonlogical component; there is an aspect of *techne* which necessarily cannot be brought into consciousness except through the immediacy of a singular, direct encounter, an encounter which takes place through sensorimotor activity and is properly grounded in one of the various forms of love, *storge*, *philia*, *eros*, *agape*. Only love can encompass or grasp the singular. (p. 182)

The *reason* that designers build the things they do, in other words, is because they *desire* those things.

Authority. Designers have a third, perhaps even more persuasive, argument available to them. As professionals, they can always appeal to their own authority. Often illegitimate, this kind of argument can be a perfectly rational move when a claim is based on expertise, experience, or status that one's opponent or client does not possess.¹³ This is an ethical appeal with obvious logical merit: other things being equal, an argument supported by a person whose position gives him or her a privileged understanding of the problem will be considered more effective than an argument without such support. The designers in this project clearly positioned themselves as "experts" vis à vis the JCC. They may have insufficiently considered counter-designs and counter-values in their presentations, then, because they assumed that their expertise was a substitute for a broad search for solutions. The obligation to question and criticize falls, therefore, to the client, who often has neither the courage nor the understanding to confront the professional's claims.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here describes several features of design argument that might be useful in the education of designers. First, the arguments advanced in the JCC project were fundamentally *deliberative*.¹⁴ This makes sense because design is about planning the non-necessary future, a domain within human control but admitting of multiple possibilities. In Goel & Pirolli (1992), for example, design involves the mental formulation and external representation of "future states of affairs" (p. 395). A study by Lawson (1980) found that designers were more *solution*-focused than scientists (pp. 30-32). For most design theorists, this orientation towards the future is a cognitive, technical, or formal problem. But rhetorically, deliberation is an *argumentative* act. For Aristotle, it involves the use of words to exhort or dissuade others

concerning debatable future events (*Rhetoric*, 1.3 1358b). If design discourse is a species of deliberative rhetoric, then it will be oriented towards future goods.

Second, these future goods are situation- and audience-specific; that is, they are constituted in discourse which is *addressed* to particular people at a particular place and time. One result of the JCC project was the students' discovery that what they previously thought to be universal or self-evident values (say, visual balance or consistency) turned out, in fact, to be particular. This doesn't mean that designers need to give up on their own sense of the good and useful, but it does mean that design practice involves negotiation of values across different social groups, an activity that many design students will have had little practice in.

Third, design requires that future, particular goods be instantiated in material artifacts. A key challenge of design discourse is this association of object and purpose. The argumentative moves examined above can be seen as responses to this challenge. How can the material world be imbued with such abstractions as "the good" and "the useful"? By claiming, for example, that an artifact *was built* with those values in mind; or by saying that an artifact *allows* those values. Making such words "stick," however, is problematic. If, as a designer, I claim that a particular object is "fun," a critic might reasonably complain that there are other objects that are equally "fun"; how is this one preferable? Similarly, other words could describe the object; it could be "fun," but it could also be "expensive." The connection of object and word involves a reciprocal underdetermination, and designers will need to be sensitive to the complexities of that connection.

In sum, this analysis suggests that the practice of design involves joint reasoning about purposive objects in situations fraught with a tension between the object proposed and all the objects not proposed but equally purposive. Design theorists have tried to ease this tension by formulating various rational models in which a problem is exhaustively analyzed, then multiple solutions generated, those solutions evaluated by a criterion indexed to the earlier problem analysis. But such models, even fitted with various feedback loops, do not seem to provide a realistic account of how designers actually work. Lawson (1980) claims, for example, that, in design, analysis and synthesis are merged; he cites several studies showing how the understanding of a design problem and the generation of solutions for that problem are contemporaneous activities (p. 33). Designers learn about a problem, that is, by exploring possible solutions to it. Research by Perkins (1977, 1981) makes a similar point; in the design process, reasoning and production are fused. Designers don't reason about a problem and then produce solutions for it; nor do they produce solutions and only later reason about them. Rather, they *produce things with the reasons already attached*.

Rhetorical analysis of naturally-occurring design discourse can lead to a fuller understanding of the design process, especially the ways in which the social embedding of design entails complex discursive challenges. The con-

clusions reached in such analysis can be useful in preparing design students for the professional demands that lie ahead of them. The typology developed in this paper, in which design arguments are grouped into *explaining*, *predicting*, *justifying*, and *warranting* categories, is one example of the kind of data-driven vocabulary that promises greater reflection, and improved practice, on the part of design students. If, for example, “explaining” turns out to be a reliably-discerned category in multiple design contexts, then designers — students and professionals alike — may benefit from having the ethical force of such discourse pointed out to them.

There are implications of this research for rhetorical theory as well. In a culture increasingly constituted by its relationship to technology, public argument is likely to occur more and more often at the interface between expert and lay knowledges, between technical and practical reasoning, between visual and verbal artifacts, between material and abstract constructions, and between individuals and the various social groups with whom they interact. We would do well to explore in greater depth the implications of those changes.

Notes

¹ I wish to thank the faculty and students of the Carnegie Mellon University Department of Design and the staff of the Jewish Community Center of Pittsburgh for allowing me to observe the project described in this paper. I am also indebted to Prof. David Kaufer of the CMU Department of English for his helpful comments on this and related papers.

² In other places, I also look at the different discursive repertoires the designers and client used to account for this project and the artifacts produced in it (Fleming, 1996a); the ways in which the students’ informal studio conversations served to stabilize and de-stabilize the artifacts under construction (Fleming 1996b, ch. 3); and the argumentative nature of visual artifacts such as those created by these students (Fleming, 1996c). In addition, Fleming, Werner, Sinsheimer, & Kaufer (forthcoming) examines the role of intra- and inter-group collaboration in student design projects.

³ Each excerpt is identified in the first line by an excerpt number (proceeding consecutively through the paper); transcript and line numbers locating the excerpt in the data archive; the date of the speech or, alternately, page numbers from a written manual. The speaker or writer of each excerpt is identified by the letter D and an individual number. Transcript notations are those developed by Gail Jefferson and presented in Text 13(2): 157-158.

⁴ The phrase is from G.E.M. Anscombe, as quoted in Davidson (1980), p.9.

⁵ For Aristotle, the end of deliberative rhetoric is *sympheron*, the advantageous, usually translated as the “expedient,” and thus often seen as a morally compromised *telos* (see Kennedy’s note in Aristotle, 1991, p. 49); but in other parts of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle seems to conceive of the advantageous as encompassing both the useful (what is good for us here and now) and the good (what is good in itself) (see 1.3-8). Cicero (*De Oratore*, II.lxxxii) writes that

deliberation aims at both the worthy and the expedient, although he admits that the latter is usually more persuasive. The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, meanwhile, claims that the end of deliberative rhetoric is “advantage,” although he later breaks this down into security and honor (III.ii). Clearly in this design project, the client would be interested in designed artifacts that *work*, but the goods appealed to by these designers (organization, unity, flexibility, elegance, reader-friendliness) might also be seen as important values in and of themselves, particularly as this is a non-profit community organization devoted to “virtuous” social and cultural goals.

⁶ According to Govier (1987), arguments and explanations are distinct intellectual and discursive operations. In explaining a thing, we generally assume that thing to be true; our effort is directed, therefore, towards showing *how* or *why* it came to be true (in deliberative terms, “good” or “useful”). In arguing, on the other hand, the conclusion is typically less certain than the premises; we put forward arguments to persuade others that our conclusion is true on the basis of reasons or evidence in support of it, rather than *assume* the conclusion is true from the outset. In other words, when we argue, we don’t explain the phenomenon under debate; we attempt rather to render it acceptable or plausible. Govier writes, “In a society where people so often tell you how, as a matter of fact, they came to think as they do while seeming incompetent to address issues of justification, to omit the distinction between argument and explanation from the pedagogy of argument and critical thinking would be a serious mistake” (p. 175). I would argue, however, that when designers “explain” their work as motivated by socially-relevant purposes or goals, an action which Govier would characterize as *non*-argumentative, they are both explaining *and* arguing; it’s just that they have left out the claim that the purpose motivating or causing their actions is, in fact, a *good* one (cf. Davidson, 1980).

⁷ Cf. Perelman & Olbrecht-Tyteca’s (1969) “argumentation by consequences” and “pragmatic argument” (pp. 263-78).

⁸ My notion of “justifying” owes a debt to Wellman’s (1971) theory of “conductive” arguments. For Wellman, conduction is a kind of ethical argument distinct from both deductive and inductive inference. It is “a sort of reasoning in which 1) a conclusion about some individual case 2) is drawn non conclusively 3) from one or more premises about the same case 4) without any appeal to other cases” (p. 52). In examples like “You ought to take your son to the circus because you promised,” one or more “good” reasons are offered in support of a conclusion, the validity of the move depending more on relevance than on formal deductive or inductive logical structures or norms. Govier (1987) associates Wellman’s conduction with what others have called argument by “balance of considerations,” “good reasons,” or “convergence.” What all these share, she claims, is a type of reasoning about particulars which doesn’t rely on some linking or overarching generalization (ch. 4).

⁹ My use of the term “warrant” here is influenced by, but distinct from, Toulmin’s (1958).

¹⁰ Regarding the inadequacy of designers' own "intuitions" in assessing their inventions and the relative superiority of empirical research (both scientific investigation and user-based iterative design), see Sims-Knight (1992).

¹¹ I am influenced here by the "critical questions" Walton (1990) proposes for practical reasoning (p. 85). His argumentation scheme for practical reasoning is as follows:

A is the goal;

B is necessary to bring about A;

Therefore, it is required to bring about B.

The four critical questions relevant to that scheme are:

Are there alternatives to B?

Is B an acceptable (or the best) alternative?

Is it possible to bring about B?

Does B have bad side effects?

¹² Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik (1979), for example, claim that "argumentation is peripheral to the artistic enterprise" (p. 266). This is debatable, but it does seem reasonable to expect that designers would make a more conscious effort to "rationalize" their work for others than would "fine" artists.

¹³ On the *argumentum ad verecundiam*, see Walton (1989, ch. 7; 1992, ch. 2).

¹⁴ Cf. Buchanan's (1989) notion that the rhetoric of design is primarily *epideictic*.

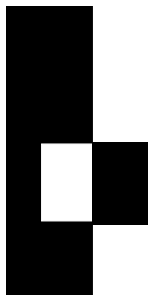
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Be Not Deceived: Looking at Historians' and Compositionists' Views of Multiculturalism in Freshman Composition Courses

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Introduction

Situated between disciplines, multiculturalism is a topic spoken about by historians, compositionists, literary critics, social scientists, anthropologists, and those in other fields. While consistent with postmodern principles that break down disciplinary boundaries, multiculturalism as a curricular phenomenon¹ depends on but also suffers from its interdisciplinary nature. In fact, a number of debates on both the right and left point to problems resulting from the pedagogical pursuit of multiculturalism. Louise Phelps, for example, argues that the teaching of multiculturalism too often serves as an agenda for instigating social and cultural change. This type of pedagogy elevates the political agenda of the faculty over their students' own agendas. Others point out that multiculturalism as a topic elicits student writing that is oversimplified, stereotypical, or superficial (see, for example, Stockton).

While many have cited reasons to help promote or discourage the use of this theme for pedagogical pursuits, little, if any, work has documented the ways students' writing about multiculturalism is filtered through their different disciplinary backgrounds. Since multiculturalism as the theme for compositions is used, quite often, in freshman core courses and/or in freshman composition courses taught by faculty from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, it is important to understand how faculty make their expectations explicit within their various disciplinary viewpoints. We know that different disciplines express arguments differently, raise different questions, and utilize different rhetorical styles. Thus, if we knew more about how faculty of different disciplines teach a core course's common texts, we would be better able to help students address in their writing complex sets of stylistic and rhetorical expectations from different disciplines.

Context

During the 1992-1993 academic year, I studied the pedagogical views and expectations of social science and history faculty in conjunction with compositionists and literature faculty who taught a freshman Core Writing

Seminar I course, entitled “Commonality and Diversity in American Lives.” While I do not mean to imply that social scientists or compositionists uniformly endorse one position respectively, or oppose each other in all arenas, differing views of this multicultural theme-based course seemed to fall quite often along disciplinary lines.

The course itself evolved as a result of ongoing curriculum planning and guidance by the director of the core curriculum, a historian, and the director of writing, a composition-trained individual. Originally a two-semester, mostly traditional English curriculum, its current form is a one-semester seminar, divided into thirteen sections all using one common multicultural anthology, one common non-fiction multicultural work, and one individually selected multicultural theme-based text among them. The stated goals of the course were to improve reading, writing and studying skills, to learn the skills and processes of academic writing, and to understand more about America as a multicultural society.

Although many colleges design their freshman composition program around a similar set of themes and goals (the 1995 CCCC’s convention had over 73 sessions on this topic alone), I worked with data from only this one particular school. It is not possible to generalize from this small sample and set of data across all disciplines, all departments and all schools. Nonetheless, I look to this small, preliminary set of data to call for more research as well as to raise questions about how disciplinary differences affect a multicultural theme-based composition course. I believe that if faculty made more explicit what has been implicitly expected of students vis-a-vis discipline-based knowledge, they would more effectively communicate with one another across disciplines and integrate multicultural issues into teaching the how-to’s of written texts.

Methodology

For this study, I examined fourteen faculty responses, out of a total of fourteen white faculty (the racial references will become clear later), to a course questionnaire, which was only part of an ongoing critical review and assessment of the course. In that questionnaire, I asked faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses of the course, its important goals, and apportionment of class time. Faculty also identified their consciously held conceptions of and frustrations with the course. Designed to elicit candor, the survey provided an additional anonymous source from faculty who may have felt less open in articulating their thoughts in our face-to-face faculty meetings, held at least twice each month.

In addition to looking for patterns of answers to the questionnaire and to commentary at meetings, I analyzed patterns of faculty responses to student essays published in *Textures*, the school’s literary magazine. The feedback from *Textures* came in many formal and informal ways. In some cases, feelings were aired at whole department meetings. Other times, they were aired in College Studies (core curriculum) meetings, department meetings, Writing I meet-

ings, in hallways, in private conversations, as well as weekly planning meetings that occurred with the director of writing, director of core courses (historian), chair of the humanities and social science department (historian), and a full professor of English. Looking for patterns of answers, I found that the kinds of accolades and reprisals in faculty responses to student writing revealed strong underlying attitudes and quite particular expectations centered within disciplines. These expectations (though strongly expressed) were not articulated in assignments distributed to students and submitted to the Director of Writing. The discrepancy between the faculty's reactions to, and instructions for, written work helped me to identify a number of key rhetorical and stylistic features expected by professors of different disciplines.

Discussion of the Findings: Faculty Responses to the Questionnaire

All fourteen white faculty teaching sections of the course responded to their feelings about the course, Writing Seminar I, Commonalities and Differences in American Lives in oral discussions as well as in writing. From the written reports, I found that social scientists and historians viewed this freshman course on multiculturalism differently from literature and composition faculty. Almost without exception, social scientists and historians saw the course as “a precursor to Social Science I” and saw the common readings in the course as “an opportunity to use texts as evidence about wider social issues.” More specifically, they noted that the material encourages students “to put evidence in the text *in context*” and helps them in “seeing evidence of racism and understanding the impact of white racism as it shapes a community, [for that is what] is essential.” In effect, what was important to these faculty was highlighting a *particular* context of the stories or essays so that what the students discovered would be in accord with what “most historians (and all good historians of the South and civil rights) would see—evidence of racism and its impact.”

Although all faculty listed “understanding racism” and “denouncing imbalances in power or racist tendencies” as a strength of the freshman composition course, the English or composition-trained faculty asserted that the course had “too much content, and too little time to focus on writing needs.” Some stated that the course “had *so many objectives*” as to be “schizophrenic.” The metaphor of “schizophrenia” underscores an awareness of the disciplinary split, particularly between content and coverage of material [on one hand] and writing skills [on the other hand]. Rather than maintaining that racism should be a course focus in and of itself, compositionists valued “teaching students to read and write in college ...read and annotate texts, read for meaning and interpretation, write original ideas about the readings” more highly. English faculty also praised writing as an opportunity to elicit facets of student identity: “I would love for students to be able to locate themselves more in the course readings and writing assignments. They need to bring *their* context to the classroom.” It was reading and writing and student reactions that English

faculty felt were crucial to the course. In fact, they were disturbed by the amount of time devoted to discussions of racism for they felt it tended to subtract time from reading and writing. This lack of writing time led to the statement that, “[We need to] clarify more our goals for a *Writing Seminar* and to thus allow it to *be* a writing seminar.” In effect, then, even as the compositionists positively regard the theme of multiculturalism, they seemed to view it more as a means to help students see patterns, create arguments, and support ideas from the readings rather than as a way to learn the content in and of itself (as historians were more wont to do).

That each discipline views a multicultural theme-based composition course differently would not be surprising to Judith Langer who explores in *Writing, Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines* broad-based distinctions between the “literature teacher [who] talks about the study of human values, ethics, knowledge of self and the world around us” (76) and the history teacher who focuses on “the collective cultural heritage of . . . a people . . . [who privilege] shared knowledge [and] . . . a sense of collectiveness” (76). Stark and Lattuca also note broad disparities in course planning among faculty from various disciplines. For example, they find that 60% of history instructors begin their course planning with course content, yet only 30% of composition instructors do (283). Given these interdisciplinary dissimilarities, it is not surprising that differences would also emerge in other pedagogical and curricular decisions, including assessments of written work. Below I describe how those differences affected faculty evaluations of student essays.

Discussion of the Findings: Responses to Students’ Essays

Disciplinary orientation affects not only the views faculty hold toward their courses, but also their judgments of which essays qualify as “exemplary” or “weak” in *Textures*. Multicultural essays from the freshman composition course comprised the journal’s sole content. As a result, the magazine became an arena for some debate about multiculturalism and a source for some disciplinary jousts. At issue, in the words of one historian, was the feeling that too many of the essays published in *Textures* (and therefore, she assumed, in all of the freshman seminars) were “weak”; in effect, they were “racist” and “blamed the victim.” Of the thirteen published pieces, two received no commentary from the historians (due to lack of familiarity with the elective works these essays covered); of the others, all but three essays received strongly negative criticism from the historian/social scientist group. Most vehement were the responses to essays responding to Faye Greene’s *Praying for Sheetrock*, a narrative, non-fiction work about a small Southern community — McIntosh County, Georgia — before and during the 1970’s, as it confronts itself and a changing social world.

History faculty particularly objected to student essays about Faye Greene’s *Praying for Sheetrock*, that noted that: 1) “racism was unchallenged by the masses of the oppressed” (Tyson); 2) “the black society in America [w]as a

society of quiet acquiescence” (Tyson); 3 “the countryside [was] untouched and unchanged” (Mapes); 4 “the Blacks continued simply to wish for change instead of creating some of the tangible social changes needed” (Mapes). In objection to the implication of passivity in the black community, historians commented, “Oh dear blame the victim” or “What would you have them do?” Historians focused more on particular ideas or attitudes as reflected in the remarks, “The larger context, not the text, should have been noted here,” and, “These student remarks only reinforce the myths and stereotypes [about race] this course is hoping to dispel.”

In another round of objections, social scientists and historians dismissed as “racist” a set of essays, accepted by compositionists, which claimed that one of the powerful white characters (the sheriff) “hoodwinked the black community.” *Praying for Sheetrock* directly states, “the sheriff had them hoodwinked” (Greene, 7). Yet, historians called “weak” and “quite racist” essays that repeated this hoodwinking theme.

While objecting to *Textures*’ publication of and compositionists’ implied praise for three “weak” essays which “perpetuated racist stereotypes and myths,” historians praised three other essays (“Much better”; “Much better understanding of the issues. This I like”; “Much better paper overall”; “Yes! At last, some [evidence] of power of people to survive.”). Yet, each of those essays (hereafter referred to as the “praiseworthy essays”) referred to the same themes as those in the “weaker” group — “passivity” (“The passive beliefs were rooted deep in the black community”) and “hoodwinking.” Given the similarity in subject matter, what made one group of essays susceptible to claims of “weakness” and “racism” while the others not? Clearly, the content alone does not distinguish them since both sets of essays about *Praying for Sheetrock* include ideas of “passivity” and of being “hoodwinked.” If not in the content domain, might the answer lie in the rhetorical domain as Geisler argued in a 1994 essay (44-5)? Are there differences in how the students interpret and present themselves and their academic arguments? What differences existed between historians’ and compositionists’ expectations of student writing? What specific instructions do each set of faculty articulate that might reflect subtle disciplinary perspectives? What clues are students given about how to write a “praiseworthy” essay and avoid the labels “weak” or “racist”? What would help the historians and compositionists to successfully communicate their expectations with their students?

History: Rhetorical Styles

These questions drove me to explore even the small samples of questionnaires and commentary available to me. I continued by looking carefully at the rhetorical style of each essay as well as its content. I found several characteristics that might assist or aid a composition teacher in helping students write more like historians, if that were desired, or help historians better understand a

student who writes from more of a compositionist's view. I describe these characteristics below.

Distinguishing Characteristic #1: Passive Voice

Among the "praiseworthy" essays, I found that each potentially "racist" comment avoided the label of "weakness" by hedging a position with the help of passive voice. That is, while the "weaker" set of authors found evidence of passivity and reported it in the active voice, the "praiseworthy" set used passive voice to make its claims less bold ("advancement was kept in check"; "the image was shattered"; "the passive beliefs were rooted deep inside the black community from slavery and religion).") Compare these "praiseworthy" phrases to the "weak" group's use of active voice: "The blacks continued to simply wish for change instead of creating it" or "the black society in [1970's rural Georgia] was a society of quiet acquiescence." The historians and social scientists accept references to "passivity" when it is presented in passive voice. With passive voice, little agency is ascribed to the black community so they cannot be "blamed" in any way for "creating" this, or any, condition (of social injustice).

Distinguishing Characteristic #2: Community

A second distinguishing characteristic of the praiseworthy papers is that even when a black community is named as an agent, it is named in concert with others: ". . . fear . . . controlled Macintosh because it was a time when *both* (emphasis mine) communities feared what the other one was going to do" (Goodman). As long as one community is named alongside the other, the author seems to be spared the "weak" or "racist" claim.

Distinguishing Characteristic #3: Context/Explanation

Third, the papers more readily upheld by the historian group provide external reasons for negative events. For example, the "praiseworthy essay" identifies slavery as the cause of passivity: "the passive beliefs were rooted deep inside the black community, drilled into the lives of small black children, such as Fanny Palmer in her childhood. It started in slavery . . ." (Brown). External explanations account for whites succeeding more than the blacks in the following quote as well: "Because the whites got to Macintosh first in relation to the McIntosh blacks, history itself was laid to claim, as if it were of good bottom land. This is one of the reasons why McIntosh had strained racial relations" (Goodman). Not only is the "victim" not responsible, but someone or something outside of either group is abstractly blamed.

In effect, then, in the praiseworthy essays the "passivity" and "deception" named in *Sheetrock* are not merely named as they are in the "weaker" set. They are named and *explained*. In that sense, the "praiseworthy" students

have fulfilled what Bruner refers to in *Acts of Meaning* as one of the “principal forms of peacekeeping — presenting, dramatizing and explicating the mitigating circumstances surrounding conflict...the objective is not to excuse but to explicate” (95). The praiseworthy essays share attention to voice, agency and explanation which are important to these historians and perhaps history as a discipline as well.

Composition: Rhetorical Styles

Distinguishing Characteristic #1: Narrative/Persuasion

Although the set of student papers identified as “weaker” by the historians does not offer explication, they offer, I believe, what Jerome Bruner refers to as narrative experiences. Specifically, according to Bruner, with narrative, the author’s version of a story conflicts with a “canonical” version, so that:

rhetorical aims or illocutionary intentions that are . . . rather partisan, [are] designed to put the case if not adversarially, then at least convincingly in behalf of a particular interpretation. . . . Getting what you want... connects your version through mitigation with the *canonical* [emphasis mine] version. . . . So, . . . narrative [is] not only as a form of recounting but also as a form of rhetoric (85) .

Defined in this way, the historians prefer the explicating or “canonical” versions of stories, and the compositionists prefer the narrative or “anti-canonical” versions. If we look at Tyson’s essay in terms of Bruner’s definitions, we see Tyson’s efforts not merely to report and explain — as those in the “praiseworthy essays” did — but to alter what occurred in the past, or what might occur in the future. That is, Tyson is in a way arguing that the blacks of McIntosh County in the seventies should have been less passive, or as he writes in another essay, to “Be Not Deceived.” In other words, while the “praiseworthy” essays explained how the phenomenon of passivity came into existence, the “weak” essays took a rhetorical stand on racism and descried it. While the “praiseworthy” essays attributed little agency to the blacks, the “weak” essays offer agency at two levels: both for the initial passivity and for the possibility of imagining change or a time without passivity. The “weak” essays experiment beyond what was to what could be. Alternatively, the “praiseworthy” essays accepted the “canon,” at least as Bruner defined it, and molded current theory to work toward explaining it. Like the children described by Bruner, the “weaker” writers are captivated by the unusual and produce ten times as many elaborations with what is anti-canonical as canonical (82).

Using Bruner’s concepts, the historian tends to accept what happened as what happened (past tense) but looks for reasonable explanations that account for it. This view could be portrayed, according to Bruner, as “canonical,” in that it upholds the past and its traditions. The compositionist or rhetorical

approach, on the other hand, focuses not on what happened, but on what might have been different (conditional past). It can therefore be viewed as “anti-canonical” in its departures from the past.

Another way to view the two groups of writers is in terms of Gates’ notions about identity and liberation politics. The “praiseworthy essays” might be similar to “identity politics,” in that they find pride in the old identity. The “weak” essays are able to be more “liberatory” in their effort to deny an old identity and synthesize a new one.

Composition: Characteristic #2: Context of Author

If we contextualize Tyson’s “weak” and “racist” essays differently, using, this time, more personal information about Tyson, would that change our point of view? Would it matter, for example, if we know that Tyson is African-American? Would it be helpful to know that he responded angrily in class to any African-Americans who lacked a contemporary, urban consciousness, one more like the consciousness that might be found in Los Angeles in 1993, or like the one held by the brother in *Brothers and Keepers* (also read during the same term) who is aware of his blackness, and fights to hold on to it at any cost? How different, in effect, is Tyson’s claim—that the blacks in Sheetrock were passive and deceived—from Toni Morrison’s claim that “During the past quarter century ... we who have been othered have awakened” (quoted in Baker, 5)? Clearly if one “has awakened,” then what precedes “the last quarter century” includes not only being “othered” but being “un”awakened—or asleep, passive, maybe even deceived. Should we still read Tyson as a “weak writer,” or a “racist?”

New Perspectives

Clearly hidden beneath each set of reactions are concrete and discipline-specific ways of knowing and making history-like or composition-like arguments. Thus, if writers had used passive voice, taken responsibility jointly, accepted past or canonical events and explicated them, the “weaker” essays might have been “praiseworthy” from a historian’s point of view. Conversely, the disuse of these stylistic features might have cast the “praiseworthy” essays into a “weaker” set from the compositionist’s point of view. The goal of this paper is not necessarily to have all students write like either historians or compositionists, but rather to better understand what lies behind individuals’ reactions and discipline-based beliefs. Put differently, if the efforts of Tyson to be “anti-canonical” had been understood, might there have been no “weak writer” or “racist” calls? Or, if I had understood then what I now believe historians expect to see, might I have been more sensitive to a historian’s point of view and reacted differently myself to the debut of the *Textures* essays? I believe that with greater cross-disciplinary knowledge, all faculty

would have better understood one another, or at least expressed themselves in more constructive ways.

In an effort to learn even more about different disciplinary assumptions, I also looked to opening paragraphs. I found that “weaker, racist” papers all began with a thesis about imagery even though that imagery also reflected larger issues: “razzle dazzle” imagery to reflect Macintosh County (Tyson); Macintosh community paralleling images of the ocean (Mapes); images of the law reflecting the community (Erazo); images of color (Malloy) reflecting the community. On the other hand, the three “praiseworthy” essays focused directly on “corruption and inequality” (Stawnuczzyi); “the strong influence of the church” (Brown); “Black[s] and whites liv[ing] in the same county, . . . but . . . never communicat[ing].” The “praiseworthy” essays directly faced the issues that interest historians and social scientist (explanations for how imbalances of power occur, for example); the “weaker” essays identify images that reflect the imbalances of power in those times, but do not necessarily focus on them directly. Given the distinctions between the two sets of papers, it is not altogether surprising, then, that the essay whose thesis was “Pharoah dreams of winning spelling bees, of finding hideouts, and of leaving Horner in order to escape the harsh reality of violence, poverty and racism in America” was viewed by a historian with disdain: “This is exactly the kind of thesis I find reflects literary modes and I consider a weak thesis — it focuses on character, and individual character development, not on connections, issues and context,” she stated. Suppose the thesis were reversed, would the historian object as vehemently? If the author had begun: “The harsh reality of violence, poverty and racism in America [calls for] a sense of escape for many within its grasp: for Pharoah dreaming of spelling bees, hideouts, and leaving Horner helps provide such relief.” Would the “content”-centeredness of the reversed sentence suffice? Would it help moderate the negative evaluative call?

Conclusion

In pointing out the differences between the sets of essays, I am not concerned with their status as either “weak” or “praiseworthy.” What concerns me, and what I hoped to show, was that faculty accusations, judgments, and beliefs about curriculum, pedagogy, and student writing reflect deeply hidden values that are in part disciplinary and/or personal in origin. Yet, we read, judge, evaluate, and teach from these undercurrents, seldom bringing them forward for closer inspection. Others have identified our “failure to articulate ways of thinking or rules of argument and evidence specific to each discipline” (Herrington and Moran, 83) and have called for greater clarity of disciplinary expectations in rhetorical, personal and content domains (see Geisler; Bazerman, among others). Their call is vital when our teaching crosses disciplinary and political lines, as it does with multiculturalism. I see, in other words, a need to problematize multicultural issues in or for composition, to see the complexities and burdens as well as benefits of teaching such a course. I

see a need, described well by Tyson's essay, that faculty and administrators of multicultural theme-based courses "be not deceived."

Teaching multicultural issues is much more complicated than we are sometimes willing to admit. But, unless we do so, and face the complex web of expectations and perspectives, teachers will be uncomfortable crossing disciplinary boundaries and hurt students with racist calls. Closer readings of texts, not only of professional authors but of students', is important. Unless instructors, regardless of their training, read students' essays both critically and analytically — for the disciplinary perspectives on content and rhetoric as well as the personal contexts that helped produce these texts — the rules that govern teaching, grading, selection of essays for publication or other rewards are compromised. So too is our purpose and function as either history/social science or composition instructors; at least as we broach increasingly complex social and political fields. Unless faculty can understand precise expectations for different kinds of texts, we risk applying to students (or to other faculty) broad labels (e.g., racist, poor writer) without concrete direction in how to write more effectively from any discipline's base. Equally important, perhaps, is the need for faculty to articulate disciplinary expectations with a level of precision that is all too rarely enacted. By researching further — from a multiplicity of data sources and perspectives on our personal, disciplinary and rhetorical domains and beliefs — we can clarify our expectations and underlying intentions, and improve not only our teaching but our students' writing and the conversations that cross departmental lines.

Notes

¹ A mere glance at publishers' catalogues reveals that every major publishing house has at least one multicultural reader if not two for freshman composition courses.

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Appendix

Faculty Survey: Writing I

1. How many sections of Writing I do you teach?
2. What is your disciplinary background and training for this course?
3. What do you perceive to be the strengths of the course?
4. What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the course?
5. Even though the course has many overall goals, which three are most important to you? Why?
6. What goals are least important to you? Why?
7. If you could change anything in this course, what would it be and why?
8. Of the 120 minutes you spend in class each week, how do you apportion the time? Name the activities you do each week and say about how much time you spend in class on each of them. (answer on back)

Program Descriptions Across the Curriculum

The SHSU Across-the-University Writing Program: Some New Twists to a Familiar Story

Patricia Williams

*Director, Across-the-University Writing Program
Sam Houston State University*

Can calculus, criminal justice, and kinesiology courses be writing enhanced? Yes! Sam Houston State University, an institution with approximately 12,000 students and 500 faculty members, implemented a writing-enhanced requirement as of fall 1991. After studying how numerous universities incorporate writing-intensive courses, the Sam Houston State Across-the-University Writing Program Committee recommended to our Academic Policy Council that all undergraduate students be required to complete six writing-enhanced courses before graduation, two in English, two in the major department, and two in any area. A writing-enhanced course is defined as one in which fifty percent or more of the grade is based on writing assignments. Students often take more than the required number because of the large selection. For instance, the University offered over eight hundred writing-enhanced sections in 1995.

To aid faculty in developing assignments and curbing the grading time, we have held over sixty-five writing workshops and yearly retreats. For the 1995-96 academic year, several workshops focused on writing and technology. During these presentations, not only did faculty hear about ways for students to e-mail assignments and locate search engines, but also they participated in these hands-on sessions. Topics such as "Combining Internet and Writing in Business," conducted by one economics and two management faculty members, and "Using the Internet for Research and Writing," taught by one English professor and two librarians, helped pique faculty interest. Then, several participants wrote articles for the semester newsletters concerning how their students were now using technology in completing writing assignments. For example, an assistant professor of health had her students develop a home page. The article appears in the May 1996 newsletter, which can be viewed at our program's World Wide Web site, http://www.shsu.edu/~edu_paw/.

Along with workshops and newsletters, we hold yearly retreats at a resort twenty-five miles from campus. One faculty member from each department is invited to attend these two-day sessions with nationally-known speakers, such as Angela Williams, Barbara Walvoord, Rob Tierney, and Carol Holder. Individuals who currently teach writing-enhanced courses or who are interested in developing these courses attend the retreats at University expense. The four academic deans help defray the costs to the Across-the-University Writing Program.

As the program has grown, we have implemented various assessment strategies, including student/faculty questionnaires, faculty interviews, and workshop/retreat evaluations. For instance, we asked freshmen enrolled in English classes about their perceptions regarding the importance of writing to a university education and their success with writing skills. Students anonymously answered the questions at the beginning and end of the semester. In addition, the Faculty Senate surveys to faculty members concerning the entire University. One question asked the faculty to rate the director's office/position on a one-to-five scale. During this past academic year, the position was rated as a 3.7, which was one of the highest ratings of the fifty-two areas mentioned.

Also, a graduate student conducted twenty-minute interviews with individuals who have and have not participated in retreats. Almost ninety percent of the retreat participants had changed their writing assignments or developed new ones. They also used more writing-to-learn activities, journal writing, and peer group revision sessions than those who had not been active. And, approximately eighty percent of the retreat participants noted that they had used different evaluation techniques. For instance, they often provided criteria assignment sheets, showed their classes model papers, and used rubrics in grading. To improve, we have continually asked faculty to evaluate both the workshops and retreats. The consistently high ratings attest to our program's success.

As we strive to improve the program, we frequently steal other universities' program ideas and add new twists to suit our needs. Feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like to share information about your program.

The Writing Across the Curriculum Program: University of North Dakota

Joan Hawthorne

University of North Dakota

The Writing Across the Curriculum program at the University of North Dakota (12,000 students) has been up until recently primarily a faculty development program. Begun with outside funding from the Bush Foundation, the program offered multiple kinds of opportunities for faculty to become involved with WAC. In addition to workshops with varied focuses and lengths, faculty were invited to participate in interdisciplinary seminars where they worked on their own writing, to apply for small grants to fund teaching-with-writing projects, to participate in leadership and evaluation training, and to help plan or teach a linked writing/content area course.

Three years into the WAC program, as we were writing the renewal grant proposal, we added programs for students (for example, writing mentors in the disciplines, and support for the Writing Center), made small changes in the

activities already offered (eliminating leadership and evaluation training, for example, and added lunch meetings to encourage on-going conversations about teaching with writing). But two program changes proved to be particularly significant. First, we created the University Writing Program (UWP) as the overarching administrative structure to coordinate campus-wide writing programs. Composition remained separate under the auspices of the English Department, but all other writing program initiatives, including the Writing Center, found their home in the UWP. The newly-hired UWP Director reported directly to the VPAA/Provost.

Second, the “linked” courses were reinvented. This aspect of the program had not succeeded as originally envisioned. Logistical impediments made it difficult to fill sections of composition that were linked to other courses, so “special majors” sections of Composition II and Business and Technical Writing were developed in place of one-to-one links. Under the second Bush grant, we imagined expanding those special majors courses, and perhaps moving some of them to the sophomore or junior level. We hoped that at least some of those special sections would be taught by discipline-based faculty, so that someone from Political Science, for example, might choose to develop and teach a sophomore course that met the second semester writing requirement. Political Science majors then would be encouraged (not required to complete the second semester of composition through the special course. There eventually might be a variety of forms for those courses, we thought, including free-standing courses in writing (some taught by content area faculty or TAs, some by English Department faculty or TAs), writing-intensive courses, and linked writing components connected to specific major courses. Departments that wanted to develop their own options for the second semester composition requirement would be assisted to do so; at the same time, more traditional composition courses would continue to be offered and no department would be coerced into creating courses that were outside the interests and abilities of its faculty.

After these plans were developed but before they could be implemented, however, the English Department hired a new director of composition; he brought to the university a different view of composition. Although the new director planned to revamp both composition courses, he firmly believed that both courses needed to be English Department owned. He imagined an integrally connected sequence of assignments, spanning Comp I and Comp II, in college level reading, writing, and research. In the face of these altered circumstances, it was clear that the envisioned alternatives to Comp II would be much more controversial than first anticipated. UWP course development efforts needed to be refocused.

Just as we reached this critical juncture in our efforts to implement the planned curricular component of the UWP, the state Board of Higher Education approved policy changes that were to have unexpected ramifications for the writing program. The Board is charged with managing a system of 11 state institutions, including five two-year colleges. Transfer and articulation be-

tween those institutions are of great public interest. To ease perceived transfer problems, the Board mandated a common body of general education credits, which could be taken at any institution and which would meet requirements for all institutions. As part of the new general education requirements, nine credits of "Communications" were required.

For those state institutions that already required two composition courses and a speech course, no institutional response was necessary. At UND, where speech was optional for most students, the result was an immediate need to create new ways for students to meet the communications requirement. A task force agreed to develop options: students could take additional writing courses (already offered by the English Department), they could take speech or a foreign language, or they could take communications-intensive courses. Writing-intensive (WI) courses are currently under development as one communications-intensive option for some students.

An ad hoc committee of the UWP met to develop criteria for WI courses. Those criteria will undoubtedly be subject to revision as we gain experience, but they initially include the following guidelines:

- * Students produce a minimum of 30 typed, double-spaced pages or about 10,000 words (including drafts, revisions, informal and formal work, graded and ungraded pieces).
- * Students write about 15 pages of finished, polished prose.
- * Courses include instruction or guidance in clear written expression.
- * The course syllabus specifies why writing is included, how much writing is expected, and how the writing contributes to the course grade.
- * Optimum class size is 25 students or fewer. Faculty wishing to create a WI course will apply, with the support of their department, for the designation. A permanent subcommittee of the UWP Advisory Committee is expected to monitor on-going course certification, in conjunction with the General Education Committee.

It is clear that many UND students will have no need for these WI courses, since students who take speech or languages already meet the new requirement. For those students who might need a WI course, two kinds of options are imagined. At least initially, most WI courses are likely to be developed within majors where students have little curricular flexibility. Faculty in Chemical Engineering and Nursing, for example, find that their students have very few elective hours available. They don't want students to face three additional credits of required courses. But faculty in both departments have been very involved in WAC faculty development for the past several years; as a result, many current courses are already close to meeting new WI requirements. Faculty in such situations are working to enhance and expand the writing component within one or more existing course(s), so that WI credit can be obtained within the major.

Other WI courses eventually may be created in departments that more typically offer general education courses, like Philosophy, Religion, Sociology, and History. However, many courses that at first might appear suitable for WI credit are in fact too large (perhaps 40 students) for an ideal WI course. Furthermore, if such a course is designated as WI, it can be expected to attract at least a few additional students who are seeking to fulfill the communication requirement. So departments are very cautiously exploring their options.

Despite the Board of Higher Education mandate for immediate response to the new gen ed requirements, we find that the UWP, too, has the time and space to be cautious. Students entering the university this fall can begin with their required composition courses, and those who are eager to immediately fulfill the whole body of requirements can follow those up with another existing course that meets their needs. A few WI courses are expected to be available by spring, mostly taught by faculty in professional majors, but we don't anticipate wholesale program expansion. The relatively slow transition to WI courses should allow us to avoid the problems reported at some other universities in the wake of institutional mandates.

But, on the whole, the new requirements may be healthy for the writing program, the students, and the university at large. They have provided a backdoor opportunity for developing courses very similar to those imagined under the renewal grant proposal some years ago. Furthermore, we are able to create those courses in exactly the gradual way initially envisioned. They allow us to imagine campus wide development of discipline-specific courses emphasizing writing, but without coupling that gain with perceived losses to the English Department. Finally, they provide an opportunity for still more faculty development of the kind we already do best: helping faculty across campus more effectively teach courses that include an emphasis on writing.

The University of Missouri's WAC/WID Program

Martha A. Townsend

University of Missouri

History/Philosophy/Context

The University of Missouri's WAC/WID program comprises four missions which link directly to MU's broader mission statement: (1) to improve undergraduate education through required writing intensive (WI) courses; (2) to enhance graduate students' education and professional preparation by assigning qualified graduate students to work closely with WI faculty teachers; (3) to provide faculty and GTA development so that instructors are supported in offering academically rigorous WI courses; and (4) to promote and conduct research and assessment related to these.

MU's fourteen-year-old Campus Writing Program had its genesis in Arts and Science faculty's request for an additional composition course. The Dean and Provost responded by convening an interdisciplinary faculty "task force on English composition" chaired by then-MU-English professor Winifred Bryan Horner. (To this day, Win delights in having demanded china not styrofoam cups for the committee's weekly early-morning meetings.) Rather than adding another composition course to the curriculum, the task force recommended a writing-across-the-curriculum program on the grounds that the English Department alone could not staff a second course, that WAC is academically sounder, and that WAC distributes resources and responsibility among all departments.

The committee's final report became CWP's founding document. MU's administration supported all of the recommendations philosophically and, equally important, fiscally. Within a short time all colleges on campus accepted the committee's suggestions by requiring at least one WI course for their students. Later, the Dean wrote that WAC "...is affecting the entire campus in ways that go far beyond . . . student composition competencies. [CWP] has become symbolic of the potential for improved teaching and active learning on this campus . . . [with] far-reaching implications for the quality of education and improvement in faculty morale..." (Glick, "Writing Across the Curriculum: A Dean's Perspective," WPA: Writing Program Administration, Vol. 11, No. 3, spring, 1988, 53-58). Pilot courses began in 1985, full implementation in 1988. A second WI course-requirement was added along with the adoption of a new general education program in 1993.

Courses in the Disciplines

MU requires three writing courses: a one-semester composition course (taught through the English Department) which is prerequisite to two writing-intensive courses (taught throughout all departments) which are facilitated by CWP. Students may take one WI course anywhere in the University curriculum; the other must be an upper division course in the student's major. Established by the Campus Writing Board (CWP's oversight committee), WI course guidelines are intentionally flexible and are intended to ensure that:

1. courses are taught by tenure-line faculty, at a 20:1 student-to-faculty ratio
2. assignments are complex enough to require substantive revision for most students, and include instructor feedback and preferably peer review during the drafting
3. a minimum of 20 pages (5000 words) of writing is done
4. at least one assignment addresses a question for which there is more than one acceptable interpretation, explanation, analysis, or evaluation

5. writing is distributed throughout the semester rather than concentrated at the end
6. writing assignments account for a major part of the course grade
7. graduate teaching assistants work with WI faculty to maintain the 20:1 ratio
8. WI faculty retain oversight of student writing and paper grading, to preclude GTAs from becoming merely “graders” (an additional set of eight suggestions describes the Board’s intent for the unique complexities of large-enrollment courses).

Administrative Issues

Approximately 100 WI courses are offered each semester, with 4400 of MU’s 16,000 students enrolled each term. Course enrollment ranges from 7 to 300. A typical course enrolls 40 students, with one professor working with one GTA. Only three courses, relies of CWP’s early concern that some students may not graduate on time, approach the 300 mark; they are being phased out. Faculty rarely offer two WI courses simultaneously; usually 100 different faculty are teaching WI courses in a given term. Currently, over 200 faculty are considered “active” WI instructors. Approximately 100 GTAs (25 FTE) are employed each semester, nearly all coming from the discipline in which the WI course is taught. GTAs are selected by the WI faculty member in collaboration with the department’s director of graduate studies; CWP provides their training.

Incentives for faculty include (1) a \$300 stipend for attending a required three-day pre-WI-teaching workshop; (2) close individual support for their teaching efforts by CWP’s seven-member staff; (3) hour-long tutorials for students in WI courses by experienced graduate students with background in the discipline; (4) on-going development opportunities such as informal “brown bags”, occasional outside speakers, and support for travel to professional conferences at which they are presenting WI-related papers; (5) one-quarter-time GTA for every 20 WI students enrolled in the course; (6) ability to support additional students in their department’s graduate program; (7) access to a community of scholars holding similar values about teaching at a research-focused institution; (8) knowledge that a significant proportion of the campus’ various teaching awards go to WI faculty. Incentives for GTAs are similar: (1) stipends for training and teaching; (2) tuition remission; (3) opportunity to work with some of MU’s finest faculty; (4) consideration for graduate teaching awards; (5) the same teaching support and development activities that are open to faculty, including conference travel monies.

Writing Program Location

CWP’s three “bosses” are the Provost, because the program is University-wide; the Deans of Arts and Science, whose college provides roughly

one-half of all WI courses; and the Campus Writing Board, which determines all program policy. The Provost funds the program; the Dean keeps tabs on operational matters; all serve as advocates for the program as needed. The Dean and Provost, in consultation with program staff, jointly appoint Board members for staggered three-year terms. Board membership is balanced for college representation, academic rank (assistant, associate, and full professorship), gender, and previous WI teaching experience and philosophy. Six faculty and one student (with full voting rights) serve on each of three subcommittees: Natural and Applied Science, Education and Social Science, and Humanities and Arts. Six additional *ex officio* members represent various other campus constituencies.

Instruction

Tenure-line faculty teach WI courses, with the assistance of a quarter-time GTA from the faculty member's department for every twenty students enrolled. Non-tenure-line faculty are approved by the Campus Writing Board on a case-by-case basis. Ideally, WI faculty are self-selected. In those cases where pressure on departments (to offer sufficient WI courses for their students to graduate on schedule) compels chairs to assign faculty to teach WI courses, the program offers a variety of assistance. Faculty and GTAs take pre-teaching and on-going workshops ranging from several hours to several days. Faculty are welcome to attend the stipended workshop without subsequently offering a WI course.

Certification

Faculty submit written proposals that include a syllabus, the writing assignments and grading criteria, a description of additional ways the course uses writing, the percentage of course grade determined by out-of-class writing and, if GTAs will be required, a plan for working with them. Approvals are given to a specific faculty member for a specific course; if the instructor changes or offers a different course, a new proposal is submitted. Updates are submitted each time the course is taught. CWP staff work with faculty to draft proposals which are sent monthly to the appropriate subcommittee for review. A week later, subcommittees convene for discussion, with the full Board meeting the following week to consider all proposals. Because the process is intended to be supportive and developmental, proposals are rarely denied; at each stage if problems arise, CWP staff or the proposer's subcommittee faculty representative follows through with constructive suggestions. Once approved, courses are flagged by Registration as "WI" in the schedule and students select courses accordingly. Courses on student transcripts are also flagged with a "WI" and a footnote that reads, "A course requiring 5000 words of writing and revision."

Evaluation

In keeping with CWP's four missions, evaluation focuses on overall programmatic effectiveness and uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, with the emphasis on the former. Because students' final WI course is an upper division requirement in their major, judgment about student performance is considered largely a departmental responsibility based on the demands and expectations of that discipline. Standardized tests required of all students are not used. The program uses a variety of assessment instruments including faculty and student attitude surveys; student course and tutorial evaluations; end-of-semester interviews with WI faculty; course file reviews during the certification process; faculty case studies; workshop evaluations; and a comprehensive annual report to the Dean, Provost, Board, and selected others.

In 1992, CWP and a University-wide independent committee conducted separate year-long studies of the program, preliminary to an external review commissioned by the Provost and Dean conducted by the Consultant/Evaluator Service of the National Council of Writing Program Administrators. Extraordinarily valuable, the process and outcomes are featured in "Integrating WAC Into General Education: An Assessment Case Study" (WAC and Program Assessment: Diverse Methods of Evaluating Writing Across the Curriculum Programs, ed. Huot and Yancy, Ablex, in press).

Research

WI faculty often find that their classes allow them to combine their teaching interests with MU's research focus. Faculty and GTAs from entomology, engineering, animal science, art history, psychology, Black Studies, English, human environmental science, and nursing, among others, have presented papers or published articles based on scholarship resulting from their WI courses. CWP staff work-in-progress includes merging technological literacy with mainstream literacies; studying the relationship between junior faculty in the disciplines teaching WI courses and their tenure and promotion cases; collecting disciplined-based writing assignments that foster critical thinking; analyzing students' science-writing discourse through vocabulary management profiles; and examining students' analogic thinking in calculus and genetics courses.

Students

Since the English Department's composition course is prerequisite to any WI course, WI students are at least second semester freshman. Although there is an implied hierarchy to the WI course sequence first, a WI course of the student's choice anywhere in the curriculum; second, an upper division WI course in the student's major students are free to take courses in either order so long as both are completed before graduation. Many students take

more than the two required courses because of the opportunity for instructor feedback on writing assignments and the assignments often replace traditional examinations.

Clemson's Many CAC Components

Jane M. Perkins

Clemson University

It's not a simple task to describe Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) at Clemson University. Historically, the program encompasses much more than writing-intensive courses; philosophically, it promotes creative change—opening new avenues to enhance effective communication and building upon synergistic program components. A description of this complex program needs to begin with two key players, Art Young and Carl Lovitt, who initiated the Clemson version of CAC.¹ This description also needs to include some of the important components of the program, and finally to detail its newest accomplishment—the requirements for communication-intensive courses in the disciplines.

Beginnings and Philosophies

Clemson University's CAC program began in 1987 with Art Young's appointment as the Campbell Chair in Technical Communication. This unique position, the nation's first endowed chair in professional communication, is a joint appointment in English and engineering. Charged with the goal of enhancing communication skills of engineering and liberal arts students across the University, Art drew on his successful WAC experiences at Michigan Tech to fashion a program of interdisciplinary communication workshops. Art introduced WAC philosophies of writing to learn, journaling and its interactive use, integration of all language abilities, and collaboration and peer response. Soon afterwards, a new endowment opportunity presented itself, and Art began fashioning a concept for enhancing communication that would reach even beyond Clemson students to the public schools and businesses in South Carolina—The Pearce Center for Professional Communication.

As the newly appointed Director of the Pearce Center for Professional Communication, Carl Lovitt helped to further define its goals and scope and to win approval from the state's Commission on Higher Education in July 1990. Originally, the Center was under the umbrella of the College of Liberal Arts and now, after the University's restructuring, is housed in the College of Arts, Architecture, and Humanities. The Center's interdisciplinary mission is reinforced by its autonomy from any academic department. Furthermore, because of its endowed funding, which provides continuing resources, and because of low overhead and salaries, the Pearce Center is able to keep resources flowing

in support of interdisciplinary programs. In addition to the original WAC philosophy, Carl has added that of Writing in the Disciplines (WID), fostering research in disciplinary and discourse conventions, especially as it ensures that all Clemson University students, irrespective of major, graduate with skills in spoken and written communication necessary to contribute meaningfully to their chosen fields of employment.

Clemson's CAC efforts are on to a new phase with the recent endowment of the Roy Pearce Class of 1941 Endowed Professorship in Professional Communication. This position will bring an established scholar to work with the Pearce Center and the students and faculty of the Master of Arts in Professional Communication program. In addition to the Pearce Professor and the leadership of Art and Carl, the Pearce Center involves numerous faculty in CAC efforts, and outreach to the public schools and industry. During the past six years, the Pearce Center Research Team, comprised of various faculty in English and Speech, has helped plan and coordinate communication projects and has provided consulting services to other disciplines. Research Team members also design components such as Writing Assessment in General Education, working with faculty in many University disciplines and presenting program innovations to regional and national assessment communities. In addition, faculty from many disciplines are involved as recipients of Pearce Center Communication, Teaching, and Research Grants that promote research and classroom innovations in WID; as speakers for interdisciplinary workshops; as contributors to the newsletter; and as members of the CAC Advisory Board.

Interconnecting Components

Although the design of the Pearce Center's activities can be roughly grouped into three areas, those areas and the many components that fall under them are interdependent and mutually supportive. Effective communication activities engender new activities, often through faculty coordinators, participants, and students. Below are some of the Pearce Center components, listed under the three main areas.

Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) Program :

- interdisciplinary faculty-development workshops
- discipline-specific workshops
- consultation with faculty in developing discipline-specific projects
- Pearce Center Assessment Program
- Freshman Engineering Survey
- National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, co-sponsors
- publication of biannual newsletter
- Faculty Research and Development Grants

Collaboration in the Public Schools:

- Writing and Thinking Workshop for young writers

- Writing for the Community Institute
- Clemson Writing Project

Professional Communication Activities:

- support of communication technologies, including Document Design Lab, Usability Testing Facility, Multimedia Authoring and Computer Classroom
- sponsor of workplace projects and internships
- Corporate Advisory Board

In addition to these components and others, the Pearce Center and its CAC programs have been influential in the recently mandated communication-intensive courses.

Communication-intensive Courses

After three years of development, the University Curriculum Committee has redefined the General Education junior-level advanced communication requirement. The new requirement will go into effect for the fall semester 1997. Currently, the Oral and Written Communication Subcommittees of the University Curriculum Committee have created guidelines for implementing these communication requirements and are in the process of evaluating course syllabi submitted by faculty in a number of disciplines. The Pearce Center has coordinated workshops to help faculty design courses, assignments, and syllabi, and Carl Lovitt chairs the Written Communication Subcommittee, which advises and evaluates W course proposals.

Depending upon the amount of writing required in the course, writing-intensive courses are designated W-1, W-2, or W-3; students must complete a total of 3 Ws. With these designations, students may earn their W-credits in from one to three courses in their discipline. Although specific criteria have been established for the different levels of writing intensity, in general, all writing-intensive courses must meet the following requirements:

1. Only courses at or above the 300-level will be designated W courses.
2. W courses will be designated and taught by faculty members who hold the terminal degree in their field or who have commensurate professional experience; faculty members who teach such courses will also be substantially responsible for reading, marking, and grading student writing.
3. Students in W courses will receive constructive feedback on some of their writing that will provide guidance for improving subsequent drafts or subsequent writing assignments in the course.
4. Writing assignments in W courses will be distributed throughout the semester rather than concentrated at the end.
5. Writing will be integrated into W courses to provide opportunities for students to further their learning in the course, instead of being used only to demonstrate acquired knowledge or to exercise writing skills.

6. W courses should provide a variety of writing experiences, enabling students to use different genres of writing to address different audiences and purposes. The total number of pages written for W courses may include informal writing, substantive revisions, and final versions of formal documents.
7. In most cases, student writing will account for two-thirds or more of the course grade in W-3 courses, for one-half or more of the course grade in W-2 courses, and one-quarter or more of the course grade in W-1 courses. Each piece of graded writing in W courses will receive a single grade that evaluates both the content and the quality of the writing.
8. W courses have enrollment limits: W-3 courses will be capped at 23 students per section, W-2 at 31 students per section, and W-1 at 38 students per section.

Because these requirements are in the implementation stage, details of scope and impact are still unknown; however, the groundwork has been carefully laid for Clemson's communication-intensive courses in the disciplines.

As an endowed center, the Pearce Center occupies a unique position at Clemson University. On the one hand, its independence from official administrative structures, programs, and mandates represents a drawback that it must constantly struggle to overcome: lacking the clout of administrative sponsorship, the center faces the ongoing challenge of demonstrating its relevance to the University's mission and its valuable contributions to meeting the institution's goals. On the other hand, that very autonomy gives the Pearce Center a freedom that few University departments enjoy, namely the freedom to innovate, to experiment, to reassess and redirect its resources to meet the ever-changing needs of the faculty and students. Its encouraging success in attracting the voluntary participation of faculty, public school teachers and students, and business representatives attests to the vitality of an active and growing program.

Notes

1 Art Young and Carl Lovitts' influence in CAC development beyond Clemson University is evidenced by their publications in the field, some of which include the following:

Lovitt, Carl and Art Young. "Portfolios in the Disciplines: Sharing Knowledge in the Contact Zone." *New Directions in Portfolio Assessment*. Edited by Laurel Black, Donald Daiker, Jeffrey Sommers, and Gail Stygall. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1994.

Young, Art. *Programs That Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum*. Co-edited with Toby Fulwiler. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1990.

A Reminder:

If you head a WAC program, and especially if it is an upper-division program or includes upper-division courses, please send a description of your program to us. We would like to share this information with other readers of this journal.